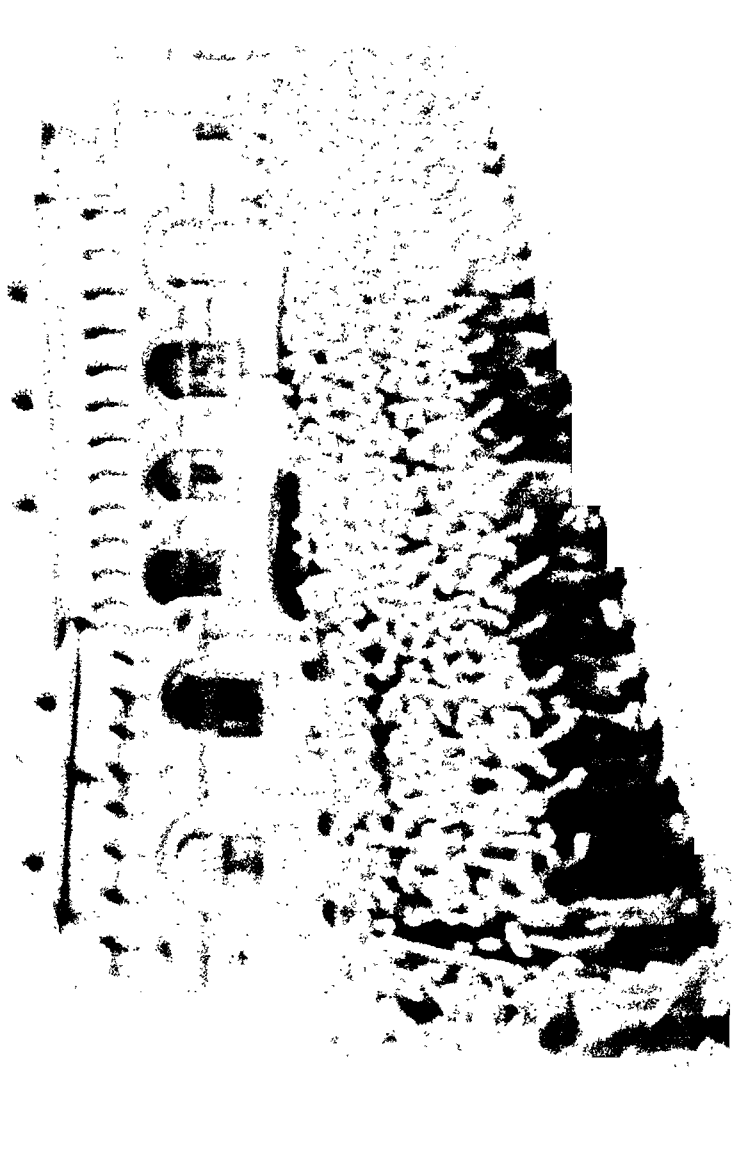


THE BOLSHEVIKS AND THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEGION



THE BOLSHEVIKS AND THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEGION

**THE ORIGIN OF THEIR ARMED CONFLICT
MARCH-MAY 1918**

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ABHINAV PUBLICATIONS NEW DELHI

Dedicated to

*the Memory of the Men and Officers of the
Czechoslovak Army Corps in Russia
1914-1918*

Contents

INTRODUCTION	xi
CHAPTER 1: DEPARTURE FROM RUSSIA	1-77
The Czechoslovak Army Corps	1
Lenin: Armed Exit	5
Trotsky: No Exit	9
Dual Policy of the Government	16
Penza Agreement	31
Supply Arrangements	35
Road to Surrender	38
Complete Disarmament Demanded	40
No Disarmament	42
Movement Stopped Again	45
New Demands	50
Final Impasse	54
Northern Route	60
Conflicting Anglo-French Policies	61
Ogorodnik's Plan	65
Problem of Tonnage	69
Which Troops to the North?	72
Bolsheviks Divide the Army Corps	75
CHAPTER 2: THE CZECHOSLOVAK COMMUNISTS	78-108
Propaganda Assault	80
The Czechoslovak Red Army	92
Headquarters in Penza	93

Samara	98
Omsk	100
Political Efforts	105
 CHAPTER 3: THE SOVIETS AND THEIR ARMED FORCES	 109-185
Red Army	112
The Internationalists	119
Political Organization	120
Activities in Russian Republic	126
Activities in Siberia	135
Western Siberia	136
Central Siberia	140
Eastern Siberia	144
Prisoners and Allied Plans for Intervention	147
Germany and the Soviet Government	149
Recommendations of Drysdale	157
Wilson Turns Down Requests for Intervention	163
The Czechoslovak-Bolshevik-German Triangle	177
Historical Myth	183
 CHAPTER 4: SIMMERING REBELLION	 186-223
Congress Delegates Elected	188
Mood of the Troops	190
Rout of Left Radicals	193
Public Fiasco	199
Appeasement to Dead End	200
Men Drill for Action	211
The Last Straw	215
Breach is Irreparable	218
 CHAPTER 5: CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE	 224-272
Decision to Dissolve the Army Corps	227
Trotsky's Plan: Peaceful Submission	238

<i>Czech Plan: Peaceful Persuasion</i>	248
<i>May 23: The Turning Point</i>	256
<i>Trotsky Mounts the Attack</i>	261
 CHAPTER 6: SWORDS ARE CROSSED	 273-346
<i>Slaughter at Omsk</i>	275
<i>Fall of Penza</i>	288
<i>Seizure of Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk</i>	313
<i>Ambush at Irkutsk</i>	325
<i>Cheliabinsk: Peace at What Price?</i>	332
<i>Fall of Soviet Power in Siberia</i>	342
 CHAPTER 7: SOVIET INTERPRETATIONS	 347-357
<i>DOCUMENTS</i>	361
<i>NOTES</i>	407
<i>SOURCES</i>	467
<i>INDEX</i>	485
<i>MAPS</i>	

Introduction

IT WAS June 1918, last year of the First World War. The Western Front was resting; there was lull. The Western Allies were recovering from the wounds inflicted upon their men by the armies of Berlin the past spring. On the Eastern Front, stretching over vast expanses of Russia, all was quiet. In fact, in the East there was no front at all.

The internal crisis and turmoil dormant within the Tsarist Empire for decades, acerbated by the strains of three years of war, came to a head in March 1918 and deposed the Romanov Dynasty. In October of that year the Bolsheviks seized power in a *coup* against the Provisional Government of Kerensky, and then under Lenin Russia left the war by separate peace concluded with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918. Her huge army was demobilized, her vitals emasculated. Parvus, a Russian emigre living in Germany, had been right when suggesting to the German General Staff in March 1915 that Russia could be fatally wounded and, eventually, eliminated as a factor in the war by exploiting the extremist, pacifist and irredentist movements with which she was pregnant for decades through supporting their exiled leaderships living in Switzerland, Germany, Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe. Now in the spring of 1918 Russia lay prostrated and under Lenin's Government which, as this study will show, internally rested to a great extent upon the bayonets of prisoners of war of the Central Powers, the Internationalists serving in the ranks of the Red Army, and externally at the mercy of the German High Com-

mand. Berlin's ambitions on the Eastern Front were thus amply fulfilled.

True, the Western Allies, mainly the British and French, were making efforts at bringing Russia back into the war. First, in January-March 1918, they hoped for an invitation of the Soviet Government to that effect, or at least for military co-operation with the Bolsheviks to lessen pressure which Berlin was putting upon their government, and when this invitation was not forthcoming after initial negotiations, they began contemplating in April an Allied military intervention to reopen the Eastern Front even without such an invitation. Their hand, however, was greatly immobilized by a grave dissent. President Wilson of the United States was the staunchest opponent of the reopening of the Eastern Front who would not contribute any American troops to the proposed venture; he also opposed the suggestion that Japanese troops could be used for the purpose. And as for the European Allies, these could spare no men from the Western theatre of operations.

Thus the Eastern flank of Germany was secured. The war was finally transformed, except for minor actions in the Balkans and the Middle East, into a one front operation, which was a cardinal aim of Berlin's grand strategy since the outbreak of the war. This enabled Berlin to execute a strategic regrouping early in 1918 and throw its manpower and resources, augmented with some 70 divisions transferred from Russia, against the Allies on the Western Front. Berlin would press for an early and decisive defeat of its adversaries before American troops, some 100,000, would arrive in France in force.

Suddenly, this strategic setting was upset by unexpected and truly spectacular developments taking place in the distant Russia, by now written off as a Western Ally. News hit the headlines of international press reporting that the Czechoslovak Legion, a body of some 40,000 troops on its way to the French Front, was locked in a deadly combat with the armed forces of the Soviet Government over the control of the Trans-Siberian railway stretching some 5,000 miles from River Volga up to Vladivostok, that the Soviet power in Southern Russia and the entire Siberia was rapidly declining, that a new Russian Government elected in December 1917 General Election and

dissolved by the Bolsheviks in January 1918 was assuming control over the liberated territories and invited the Western Allies to enter Siberia from Vladivostok to reopen the Eastern Front, and that because of this invitation a massive Allied Intervention of some half a million men was imminent. A new Russia was in the making in these stirring developments, wishing to rejoin the Western Allies and striving to organize a new army in order to renew the war on Berlin and Vienna. Thus in June and July 1918 prospects brightened up about the possibility of the war being transformed into a two front operation again, with Paris and London pressing hard upon Wilson to change his mind while Berlin making every effort to sustain the Bolsheviks in power to defeat the Legion as well as the domestic opposition to checkmate the Allies.

The daring military exploits of the Legion, and their significance for the grand strategy of the Western Allies, received highest tributes and accolades from the leading men of the day who shaped the destiny of the world at the time. President Pointcare of France considered them comparable, even surpassing, the exploits of Xenophone during his Anabasis in leading some 10,000 troops, the reminder of the great expedition which Cyrus led into Persia in 401 B.C., out of that country on their way to Greece. British Prime Minister Lloyd George said that this daring enterprise and the triumphs of this small army were really one of the greatest epics of history. Theodore Roosevelt, who succeeded Wilson as President of the United States, gave part of his Nobel Prize for Peace to the men and officers of the Legion saying that their deeds have no parallel in ancient or modern warfare because they suffered so much to enable other people to enjoy freedom. And Winston Churchill admiringly wrote about their Odyssey that the pages of history scarcely recall any parallel episode at once so romantic in character and extensive in scale.

Since those momentous developments taking place in Russia in summer of 1918 much has been written about the most important consequences of the armed confrontation of the Czechoslovak Legion with the armed forces of the Soviet Government. First, about the terrible Civil War into which Russia was plunged immediately following the outbreak of the struggle between these two adversaries at the end of May. Second,

about the attempts of London and Paris to take advantage of the seizure and control of the entire Trans-Siberian railway from the basin of Volga River up to Vladivostok by the Legion in order to convince President Wilson that the Intervention was now a practical possibility not only for the reopening of the Eastern Front but for giving support to the new Russia to cast off the Bolsheviks, free the country from the hold of Berlin and give a chance to the newly elected constitutional government to consolidate its rule. Although the armed confrontation between the Soviet Government and the Legion was the touchstone of all these studies, the origin of this conflict received little attention in scholarly literature.

Leaving aside the tributes and accolades accorded to the military exploits of the Legion, some of them exaggerated, the purpose of the present study is rather a modest one because it is attempting to narrate and document the story of only the origin of this great armed confrontation as completely as possible on the basis of evidence now available. The task is particularly intriguing because the event has been veiled for years in obscurity and suffered from serious distortions, and because the Soviet Government established its own version, and authoritatively so, by Lenin and Trotsky only a month after its outbreak. The core of its argument is a contention that France and Britain had instigated the Legion into the anti-Soviet uprising, and that upon their urging the latter entered into conspiracy with the anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia to overthrow the Soviet Government. The whole plot is presented as the opening stage of the Allied Intervention in Russia, this to be mounted not to reopen the Eastern Front but primarily to suppress Lenin's government. This conspiracy theory was later taken by Soviet historians as the revealed truth and refurnished with circumstantial evidence which made it surprisingly plausible. The deception was so masterful that some of its elements have found their way into serious and reputable works of some Western scholars. The reason was on hand. While the opening of archives in Paris, London and Washington enabled the scholars a reasonably clear restructure of the evolution of the Allied policies towards Russia under Lenin during the spring month of 1918, the central piece of the whole mosaic, i.e., the origin of the armed conflict between the Legion

and Bolsheviks, was missing or veiled in mystery, suspicion and guesses because of no access to the Soviet and Czechoslovak sources on this topic to verify the contentions of Soviet writers.

And here the present study comes in. It is based primarily upon the orders issued by the Soviet Government to its troops and local authorities regarding the Legion which had been secured when the latter captured the large territories of the Volga basin and then the entire Trans-Siberian line. These documents are essential for establishing the role which the Soviet Government as well as the local Soviets played in the origin of the event because they enable us to follow on a day-to-day basis and in an extraordinary detail the evolution of their policies over the whole spectrum of postures, from helpfulness and friendship in March to intense hostility at the beginning of May. To establish the role which the Legion played in the origin of the struggle the study draws upon the documentary records of its political and military leadership relating to that period. The most important documents which have a bearing upon the story, whether from Russian or Czech sources, are translated in the Appendix.

The story which emerges from the evidence now available and cited in this study regarding the origin of the great confrontation is much different from the one presented by Lenin and Trotsky and then amplified by Soviet writers in the many accounts of this event until today.

The story starts on March 15 and 16, 1918 when Lenin permitted some 70 trains of the Legion to embark upon their voyage to France *via* Vladivostok, but then suddenly the Soviet Government reversed itself and on March 20 ordered their movement to be stopped. At the root of this decision lay the profound military weakness of the Soviet Government following the dissolution of Russian armed forces as a result of the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk concluded early in March and the desire of the government to use the Legion as a nucleus for organizing a new Red Army of some half a million men, announced by Trotsky on March 21, 1918.

In order to secure the services of the Legion for the purpose Trotsky entered into negotiations with the French on March 18, making a formal request to that effect. In addition, he

started negotiations also with the British and Americans to explore the possibilities of their military assistance to the Bolsheviks.

When, however, the French as well as the leadership of the Legion rejected Trotsky's request, the Czechoslovak Communists appeared on the scene; these were the men who had not joined the Legion but cast their lot with Bolsheviks organizing for them the Czechoslovak Red Army. These men now started to fill the ears of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin with the tales that the men in the Legion were being dragged out of Russia against their will by their "counter-revolutionary officers to serve the interests of Western imperialists", and that given a chance to unfold a propaganda campaign among the troops they would enlist into the Red forces the proletarian core of the Legion estimated by them at some 15,000 men. As a result, several groups of these agitators were dispatched to the railway centres in which the trains of the Legion were immobilized to unfold the campaign with assistance of the local Soviet authorities. Hand in hand with the efforts against the Legion the Soviet Government mounted a campaign among the prisoners of war of the Central Powers for enlistment into the Red Army because Russian nationals could not be induced to volunteer in any significant numbers for the Bolshevik armed forces. Here the campaign was successful, the military formations of the prisoners of war, known as Battalions of Internationalists, constituting some 40-50 per cent of the armed forces of the Bolsheviks which at the end of April 1918 stood some 30,000 troops, including the fateful Latvian Guard.

When it became obvious that the propaganda campaign of the Czechoslovak Communists was not successful, instead of delivering the promised 15,000 troops they succeeded in inducing only 150 men to desert the Legion and join the Red forces, the Soviet Government decided for a forcible dissolution of the Legion in the middle of May. By that time its trains stood immobilized in many railway stations, scattered over hundreds of miles along the Trans-Siberian line, to which Moscow started to dispatch troops to reinforce the hand of local military commanders for the encounter. The move against the Legion was mounted on May 21, when Trotsky arrested its political leaders at that time in Moscow, and in jail forced them into signing a

telegram ordering the troops to completely disarm and surrender to the protection of the Soviet authorities. Hand in hand with this telegram went a secret order of Trotsky to all local Soviets to approach the trains as soon as they had disarmed themselves in order to dissolve the units and enlist the men into the Red Army or organize them into labour battalions. When the troops, however, refused to disarm and surrender to local Bolsheviks, Trotsky ordered on May 23 that the troops must be disarmed forcibly, their officers arrested, units dissolved and anyone resisting shot on the spot.

This then set the events upon a collision course on the Soviet side. On the side of the Legion, the event developed mainly as a response to the initiatives emanating from Moscow.

As the first response to the move of the Bolsheviks ordering the Legion's trains to be halted on March 20 its leadership concluded an agreement with them in Penza on March 26; the Legion agreed to substantial disarmament while the government promised to renew the movement as soon as weapons were surrendered. As the next concession to the Soviet Government the leadership of the Legion agreed to Trotsky's demands for propaganda campaign amongst the troops in order to recruit volunteers for the Red Army, and as a result the Czechoslovak Communists were facilitated free access to the trains and guaranteed safe conduct to unfold the campaign.

When after the conclusion of the disarmament and the propaganda campaign for volunteers the movement of the trains was not renewed, and when the Bolsheviks pressed for new demands for complete disarmament, the Legion became polarized and split into two camps. The political leadership and the top military command advocated further concessions as the price to be paid for lifting the ban on the movement to escape the encirclement by the Red forces which now began to converge upon the isolated trains. The rank and file men and their commanding officers opposed any further concessions, refused disarmament and demanded the renewal of the movement through self-help. They argued that the over-all balance of forces between the Legion and the Bolsheviks was at that moment in favour of the former, that this advantage would be lost soon because of the evident concentration of Soviet forces composed mainly of

vik coup. Because the evidence in these areas is far from complete, and also because of disagreements among the specialists, many conclusions, assessments and estimates made in these areas must remain tentative and provisional until new evidence is on hand, leaving thus these topics wide open to further research.

Another *caveat* relates to the spelling and transliteration of many personal and place names, and although an effort has been made to introduce some degree of uniformity many names appear in the form in which they appeared in the original documents. Finally, it is much regretted that due to technical difficulties it proved impossible to indicate with diacritical marks the accents and other features in many words in Czech, Slovak and other languages used in this work. Because the story unfolds in many places in Russia and Siberia, a map is provided for general orientation of the reader.

Research was carried out in Washington, New York, Cambridge, Princeton, New Haven, Toronto, London, Paris, Vienna and Tokyo. Thanks are due to their libraries and research archives for access to their collections and assistance with microfilming, xeroxing and other services.

The study represents the second volume of a series on *Czechoslovakia and Russia*, and follows the first volume entitled *Revolutionary War for Independence and the Russian Question: The Czechoslovak Army in Russia 1914-1918* (Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1977). The third volume is in preparation.

Brock University
January 20, 1978

V.M.F.

1

Departure from Russia

CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY CORPS

AT THE outbreak of the March Revolution in Russia in 1917 the First Czechoslovak Brigade, known as the Czechoslovak Legion, was deployed in the Ukraine against the armed forces of the Central Powers. This military body had been raised during the First World War from Czech and Slovak settlers residing in Russia, but largely from prisoners of war of these two nationalities who had either been captured at the Eastern Front by the Russians or had deserted the Austro-Hungarian army.*

The Brigade was under political leadership of the Czechoslovak National Council Branch for Russia. Its Presidium consisted of Prokop Maxa, Bohumir Cermak and Jiri Klecanda, and the entire Branch was responsible to the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris. Under the leadership of Thomas G. Masaryk, Eduard Benes and Milan Rastislav Stefanik the Council directed the entire diplomatic, political and military action aimed at the liberation of the Czechs and

* For the origin of the Legion see Victor M. Fic, *Revolutionary War for Independence and the Russian Question: Czechoslovak Army in Russia 1914-1918*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1977.

Also Geburg Thunig-Nittner, *Die Tschechoslowakische Legion in Russland: Ihre Geschichte und Bedeutung bei der Entstehung der 1. Tschechoslowakischen Republik*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1970.

Slovaks from Hapsburg rule and the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state.

In military affairs the Brigade was under the command of a Russian officer, General Shokhorov, who was appointed by the Tsarist Government; his staff was composed of Russian, Czech and Slovak officers. The troops enjoyed a considerable degree of self-government through the functioning of the Army Soviets, or Councils, which had been established in every unit of the Brigade to take care of education, hygiene and minor administrative matters. These bodies were created on the basis of Decree Number One of the Provisional Government of Russia and the Petrograd Soviet, issued on March 1, 1917. Because at that time the Brigade functioned as an integral part of the Russian armed forces the decree was implemented also among the Czech troops.

The March Revolution suddenly and fundamentally changed the entire position of the Brigade. Between July 23 and 27, 1917 Masaryk visited the Headquarters of General Alexei A. Brusilov, Commander of the Southern Sector of the Front, in order to seek clarification of the legal status of the Brigade in the new political circumstances. The negotiations resulted in an agreement which defined the Brigade as a "Revolutionary Army in a state of war with the Central Powers". In all military matters the Brigade was to remain responsible to the Russian High Command, but all political and diplomatic matters were the responsibility of the Czechoslovak National Council in Russia. The agreement further recognized that the National Council in Russia was affiliated with the Paris Headquarters of the Czechoslovak liberation movement. This latter clause conferred upon the National Council in Russia a special international status, which was further reaffirmed by a provision to the effect that the Council and the Brigade, as bodies politically directed from abroad, must not interfere in internal affairs of Russia.

A rapid growth of the ranks of the Brigade prompted Masaryk to see the Commander-in-Chief of Russian armed forces, General L.G. Kornilov, in Mogilev on September 6, 1917. Because a great number of Czechs and Slovaks released from the prisoner of war camps had joined the Brigade, Masaryk suggested that its two divisions should be reorganized. Kornilov agreed and promised to issue appropriate orders. But

before the agreement could be implemented Kornilov was dismissed by the new Premier of the Provisional Government, A.F. Kerensky. In view of this turn of events Masaryk submitted the agreement directly to Kerensky, who on October 9, 1917 renamed the Brigade the Czechoslovak Army Corps in Russia. The international status of the National Council in Russia received a further recognition when the Council was requested to designate one of its members to represent it on the *Stavka*, and to appoint an officer to liaise between the military command of the Army Corps and the Chief of Staff of Russian armed forces.

The overthrow of Kerensky's Government by the Bolsheviks brought no change in the international legal status of the National Council in Russia and its Army Corps. A few hours after the Bolshevik coup on November 7, 1917 Masaryk telegraphed from Petrograd to the command of the Army Corps instructions to the effect that he considered his agreement with Kerensky valid and that the Czech troops must, at all cost, maintain strict neutrality regarding the civil conflict that broke out in Russia.

This situation, however, did not last long. Important changes in the legal status of the two bodies were precipitated on November 20, 1917 when the Soviet Government offered armistice to the Central Powers, and then on December 3 when negotiations were initiated for separate peace. During the intervening period the National Council developed a position that the peace negotiations of the Soviet Government with the Central Powers had terminated the last vestiges of the legal, political, and moral obligations binding the Council and the Army Corps to the Russian state, which was now under the rule of the Bolsheviks. If the Soviet Government wished to seek separate peace with the Central Powers it could do so. The Czechs, however, would remain in a state of war with Berlin and Vienna and this must govern their relations with the new Russian state and the Soviet Government.

Another factor favoured this position taken by the National Council. The Czech troops were stationed on the territory of the Ukraine, which had its own Provisional Government claiming independence from the Soviet Government in Petrograd. This meant that the Army Corps, stationed as it was on

foreign territory, could no longer remain subordinate to the Russian High Command in military matters. In view of this, Masaryk concluded an agreement with the Government of the Ukraine on January 15, 1918 which recognized the authority of the National Council over the Army Corps, as well as the Council's affiliation with the Paris Headquarters of the Czech liberation movement, and which guaranteed at the same time mutual neutrality between the Czech troops and the armed forces of the Ukrainian Government.

In view of this new international status of the Army Corps the National Council decided for a bold action. In the past, the Czech troops in Russia had pledged allegiance to the Russian Government: first to the Imperial and then the Provisional. Considering all legal ties with the Soviet Government terminated the Czech leaders prepared a text of a new military oath whereby the troops would pledge allegiance to the National Council. At a specially arranged ceremony held in Kiev on January 18, 1918 all members of the National Council promised to carry on the war against Austria-Hungary "until she is destroyed and a new Czechoslovak state arises on her ashes in the fulfilment of its historic right and in accord with the Law of Nature". In order to administer the oath to the troops in the field several specially authorised representatives were dispatched to the front on February 5, 1918. However, the renewed hostilities of the Central Powers on February 18, after the collapse of Brest-Litovsk negotiations, caused a serious dislocation of the Czech troops and the plan for administering the oath had to be deferred.

Even before the separation of the Ukraine from Russia the international status of the Army Corps had changed greatly. In the first place, the French Government had accorded a co-belligerent status to the Czechoslovak Army fighting on the Western Front on December 16, 1917. Secondly, Benes telegraphed from Paris to Masaryk, who was at that time in Kiev, that if the Army Corps in Russia would declare itself an integral part of the Czechoslovak Army in France the French Government would welcome this step. This communication was received by General Tabouis, Chief of French Military Mission in Kiev, who gave it to Masaryk on January 10, 1918. Masaryk agreed on the same day and the National Council approved on

January 22. Hence, on that day, the Czechoslovak Army Corps stationed in the Ukraine became an Allied military formation. Because there was no more use for its troops in Russia or the Ukraine, in view of the negotiations for separate peace between the Soviet Government and the Central Powers, the French military representatives in Kiev agreed with Masaryk's suggestion on February 14 that the entire Army Corps be removed to France through Vladivostok. The French Government considered the Ukraine and Russia indefensible by that time and approved the suggestion, of which Masaryk was informed in Kiev on February 18.

These developments thus paved the way for the departure of the Army Corps from the Ukraine. Within a few days the troops boarded some 72 trains and began moving towards the frontiers of Russia, with Vladivostok and then France in mind.

Lenin: Armed Exit

The first troops crossed the Ukrainian-Russian border at Kursk. To facilitate the passage across Russia and dispel the fears of the commander of the Bolshevik forces in south Russia, Antonov-Ovseienko, the leadership of the Army Corps voluntarily gave up a substantial portion of heavy armament, including all artillery and several dismantled airplanes. This voluntary disarmament took place on March 16, 1918, and the Czech Command received a handsome tribute from Antonov-Ovseienko on the same day for this goodwill towards the Bolsheviks.

Meanwhile, the Czech leaders initiated negotiations with the Soviet Government on March 15 then established in Moscow. The Czech side was represented by Secretary of the National Council J. Klecanda; the Soviet side by A.A. Aralov, M. Mandelstam, and J.V. Stalin. The general situation in the country and the position of the Bolsheviks at the moment were extremely auspicious for the Czechs. The new capital of the Soviet Government played host to the Fourth Special All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which after several postponements was convened on March 14 to consider the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty concluded on March 3, 1918.

The Bolshevik Party came to the Congress with a proposal that the peace treaty be ratified. The issue within the party had

already been decided at the Seventh Party Congress, held in Petrograd on March 6 and 7, 1918 at which Lenin defeated both the "no-war-no-peace" opposition as well as the advocates of a "revolutionary war" against the Central Powers. The party adopted his proposal that the peace treaty should be ratified and that the government should present this proposal to the Congress of Soviets for approval.

We do not know exactly where in Moscow Klecanda met the representatives of the Soviet Government on March 15. From his own record of the meeting it would appear that he and the Bolshevik leaders met in the Military Commissariat while Lenin presided over a meeting of the government.¹ The next day, March 16, Klecanda negotiated directly over the telephone with Lenin, who communicated to Klecanda the decision of the government. The available evidence relating to Klecanda's negotiations with the Soviet leaders shows that two principal issues were discussed and agreed upon during those two days.

The first issue was the departure of the Army Corps for France. This was approved by the Soviet Government on March 15, when Lenin not only agreed to the departure of the Army Corps, but urged the Czechs to leave as soon as possible. He objected to a plan of evacuation by stages presented by the Czechs. The plan, prepared by their military commanders, visualized successive concentrations of the whole Army Corps first in the area Yelets-Orlov, then in Samara, Cheliabinsk, Omsk, and finally in Irkutsk, before reaching Vladivostok. Security considerations, based on the desire to have the whole train column always concentrated, were behind the reasoning of the Czech military leaders. Lenin objected on the ground that such a procedure would unnecessarily prolong the whole operation and demanded that the trains should go straight to Vladivostok without any undue interruptions and delays. Time was important for Lenin, who permitted the Army Corps through Russia fully armed; in fact, no mention was made even of partial disarmament of the troops during the negotiations. Because of this urgency, and as soon as the final agreement was reached on March 16, Lenin dispatched a cable to all local Soviets along the Trans-Siberian railway informing them that the Czechs were permitted to leave Russia and requesting that all

assistance be extended to facilitate their speediest transfer to Vladivostok.²

Obviously, Lenin was quite earnest to fulfil the terms of the peace treaty with Germany in order to gain the necessary *peredyshka*, or breathing-spell, during which the Bolsheviks could consolidate their rule. Because Article 5 of the peace treaty called for demobilization of the old Russian army and Article 8 for an early exchange of prisoners of war, the armed Czechoslovaks—in the eyes of Vienna these were Austrian citizens to be exchanged—could be a source of serious trouble for the Bolsheviks. The treaty had been ratified on the previous day, and a speedy removal of the Czechs out of sight and away from Central Russia might dispose with this issue before the Central Powers could make such a request.

The local Soviet authorities, who in the meantime were holding up the trains of the Czechs, upon receiving Lenin's order allowed them to proceed towards the Penza junction, through which all trains had to pass on the way to Vladivostok, without requesting disarmament or placing restrictions on their movement. Thus on March 19 the first trains of the Army Corps arrived in Penza, the western-most terminus of the *Magistral*, a Russian name for the Trans-Siberian railway.

The second issue agreed upon by Klecanda and the Soviet leaders on March 15 and 16 concerned some 50,000 Czech and Slovak prisoners of war who had not yet joined the Army Corps, and who were either scattered in distant prisoners of war camps or worked in factories, mines and on farms.

In his memorandum of March 3, 1918 Masaryk had proposed that these men should be organized at Omsk into the Second Army Corps. This body would remain in the country either to assist in military operations any Russian government willing to renew the war on the Central Powers, or help in the restoration of Russian army, regardless of whether or not the troops would be directly involved in the fighting. Were this impossible but Russia was at war, then Masaryk believed that the men could be used as a labour force in factories and otherwise contribute to economic reconstruction of Russia. His only condition regarding the use of the *Second Army Corps in Russia* was that a precise agreement between the National Council and the Russian Government must be concluded con-

cerning the aims of its services, problem of command, jurisdiction and related matters. Masaryk's proposal was approved by the National Council on March 7, which further decided that its Financial Commission and the Prisoners of War Commission, at that time functioning in Moscow, would be moved to Omsk in due time to initiate the work.

On March 14 Klecanda discussed the problem of organization of the Second Army Corps with General Rampont from the French Military Mission in Moscow. The general agreed with the plan and said that he could assist with some 4 million rubles and perhaps even more during the first month. He said that he would discuss the whole matter with General Lavergne, Military Attache, who would be arriving in Moscow from Petrograd on March 14 or 15.³

When during the negotiations on March 15 Klecanda informed the members of the Soviet Government about the plan of the National Council to organize the Second Army Corps in Omsk and about its purpose, they welcomed the project because as Stalin said at that time even the Soviet Government would have to reorganize its armed forces beyond the Urals in order to resume the war against the Central Powers. In view of this, said Stalin, the Bolsheviks would welcome the assistance of the Czechs. Lenin approved the plan after being informed about it by Mandelstam on the 15 over telephone, and the Soviet Government gave its formal approval on the next day.

Following the agreement of Klecanda with the government permitting the National Council to organize the Second Army Corps in Omsk, the representatives of the Prisoners of War Commission and the Financial Commission had further talks with Soviet officials about details. It was agreed that in order to obviate Article 8 of the peace treaty, which provided for an early exchange of prisoners of war, all organizations of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war in Russia would be called Organizations of Immigrants.⁴ Furthermore, the National Council received permission to remove these two commissions to Omsk so that work could be initiated on the project, and both commissions left Moscow on March 18 or 19.

On March 23, 1918 the official organ of the National Council, *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, declared that it was important to organize the Second Army Corps and revealed that such a

work had been launched in Omsk. Its troops might go to France, but it was more probable that they would remain in Russia. The National Council must base its plans upon an expectation, obviously inferred from Stalin's statement to Klecanda, that Russia would rise to rejoin the war against the Central Powers. The Second Army Corps would then definitely remain in the country to help the Russian army fight the enemy. The writer of the article was well informed and accurately expressed the agreement of the National Council and the Soviet Government regarding the aims of the Second Army Corps.

Thus after Klecanda's negotiations with Stalin and Lenin on March 15 and 16 the Czech leadership believed that it had a broad agreement on the departure of the First Army Corps from Russia and on the organization of the Second Army Corps in Omsk, and that all to be settled were details relating to administration, supply, financing and technical aspects of transportation.

This, however, was not so as soon as Trotsky appeared on the scene and became interested in the Czech troops.

Trotsky: No Exit

Lev Davidovich Trotsky was a man of a psychological make-up quite different from Lenin's. He upset all the plans of the Czechs about the exit of their First Army Corps from Russia. Excitable, exaggerating, with a flair for drama, for the past few weeks he was filling the ears of Jacques Sadoul, Raymond Robins, and Bruce H. Lockhart with tales concerning the possibility of Allied-Bolshevik military co-operation. These three men were the "unofficial" representatives of France, the United States and England through whom the Allied governments dealt with the Bolsheviks. Trotsky was the main agent of the Soviet Government to keep in touch with the Allies, while K. Radek and A. Joffe dealt with the Central Powers and L. Karakhan with Far Eastern affairs. Lenin was mostly detached. He maintained balance among his lieutenants and skilfully directed them to exploit the anxieties among the Allies and the Central Powers in order to prevent the Bolsheviks from succumbing under the controlling influence of either side.

How did the Czechs fit into these negotiations of the Allies

with Trotsky concerning the possibility of their military co-operation with the Bolsheviks? The plans of the French involving the Czechs in the Ukraine have already been touched upon. It will be recalled that Paris had considered the Ukraine and Russia indefensible and that on February 18 the First Army Corps had received a green light from Paris to embark upon the voyage to France.

But we also know that on the previous day, February 19, Paris offered money and war material to the Soviet Government if it would resist the fresh German attack which had been launched on the previous day in the Ukraine, and that a cable to that effect had been dispatched to J. Noulens, the new French Ambassador in Russia. The French Government informed Washington about this proposal and from that dispatch it would appear that Paris had promised only money and war material but no assistance with troops.⁵ But Sadoul, in describing how this offer was telephoned by Noulens to Trotsky, states that the ambassador had told Trotsky that the Bolsheviks could count upon financial as well as military support of France, meaning troops, if they resisted Germany.⁶

From available evidence it appears unlikely that the French double-crossed the Czechs and offered the Army Corps to the Bolsheviks. It was perhaps Sadoul's enthusiasm for the Bolsheviks which stretched the point while reporting to Albert Thomas, a Socialist member of the French Cabinet, the substance of Noulens' conversation with Trotsky. The French were hardly in a position to offer troops of their own, except by throwing in the Czechs. The records of the Army Corps, however, do not even hint at such a possibility and, in fact, show the opposite.

An inquiry into Allied-Bolshevik relations immediately following the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty also shows that neither the Allies, nor Trotsky, brought the Czechs into the picture at that time. For one thing, Trotsky was not a party to the negotiations with Klecanda in Moscow on March 15 and 16, as he was in Petrograd and arrived in Moscow in company of Lockhart on March 17.

However, the situation radically changes on the next day, May 18, when Trotsky, now Commissar of War, opened negotiations with Allied representatives concerning the possibility

of military co-operation. On that day he received Robins, the untiring advocate of Allied-Bolshevik co-operation and a great admirer of Lenin. The commissar requested Robins to communicate to Washington that he would welcome five American officers to be assigned to act as inspectors of organization, drill and equipment of the new Soviet Army just being organized by him.⁷

Next came the French. Sadoul visited Trotsky on March 19 and offered military assistance. It seems that Sadoul suggested that the Bolsheviks could use some French officers for training and organizational purposes. Several hundred of them were available in Moscow at that time, because they were on their way to France from Rumania after her collapse. Perhaps the departure of the Czechs was also discussed. Nothing specific, however, was agreed upon. The War Commissar was cool because he was offended a few days before by former French Ambassador, General Niessel, when he had called to say good-bye before departing for France. This is Sadoul's explanation of Trotsky's coolness to his proposals.⁸

The fact that Sadoul made some offer of assistance to the Bolsheviks on March 19 was confirmed by Trotsky himself. The confirmation is significant, because it contains the first known reference of the War Commissar to the Czechs.

On that day Trotsky presided over a meeting of the Supreme Military Council, held in his staff train at Alexander Station in Moscow. According to an account of the meeting given by Antonov-Ovseenko, who participated, Trotsky informed the assembled military commissars that the French Military Mission had shown a great interest in the possibility of Soviet resistance against Germany and that it had approached him with an offer of assistance. In what form this assistance would be given remained, however, the secret of the French, he added. Some members of the mission had gone to Kharkov to ascertain the needs of the Bolshevik armies in the Ukraine. Trotsky regretted that in the meantime the Czechoslovak Army Corps was departing from the Ukraine, in co-operation with the French, leaving the Red Army alone on the battle-field.

Differences appeared among the commissars as to the further direction of the movement of the Army Corps. According to Antonov-Ovseenko, N.I. Podvoisky suggested that the Czechs

soon as possible. Trotsky admitted that this was a tremendous task, but said that it must be undertaken to prepare for every eventuality. In view of this, Trotsky undoubtedly saw in the 40,000 troops of the First Army Corps, plus the troops of the Second Army Corps, a significant contribution to his effort. Moreover, the troops of the First Army Corps—already trained, organized and armed—would substantially buttress the existing military position of the Soviet regime which was not too good at that time.

Trotsky's hope that he could use the troops of the First Army Corps for the promotion of his grand plan was short-lived. Lavergne had cabled to Paris Trotsky's request concerning the utilization of these troops in Russia, and on March 21 he had a reply from General Foch. The communication from Foch stated that in principle he would agree to the use of some of these troops in Russia provided that the Czech leadership would agree, which Lavergne was authorized to find out.¹¹

Accordingly, Lavergne summoned Cermak for a conference on the next day, March 22, during which this member of the Presidium of the National Council rejected Trotsky's request. Cermak argued that the Czechs had agreed to leave in Russia the troops of the Second Army Corps and insisted that the troops of the First Army Corps must be removed to France as had originally been agreed upon between Klecanda and Lenin on March 15.¹²

Subsequently to that the National Council in Paris also rejected Trotsky's request on April 2 in a letter to Clemenceau arguing that the transfer of the First Army Corps to France was "the unbending will" of the troops in Russia clearly evident from numerous cables of General Lavergne.

Immediately after his conference with Cermak, Lavergne informed Trotsky on March 22 that it would be impossible to leave the troops of the First Army Corps in Russia because of the insistence of the Czech leadership upon their transfer to France. Nothing is known about the response of Trotsky except the fact that Aralov's order remained in force and that the local Soviets attempted to implement it.

Meanwhile, it was upon the local Soviets to implement Aralov's cable ordering them to stop the movement of the

trains transporting the troops and disarm them. Accordingly, the trains spearheading the movement towards the east were stopped in Penza and the commissars refused to renew their movement without giving any explanation. They could not, however, disarm the troops; that task was beyond their resources and they cabled so to Trotsky. The Czechs could not be forced to disarm, said the cable, they were too many and too well armed.¹⁶

It was only after receiving a new order, this from Stalin, that the commissars in Penza approached the Czech leaders on March 23 with a demand that the troops must unconditionally and completely disarm.¹⁷ The leaders rejected this demand and invoked Lenin's permission of March 15 and 16 which had granted them a free and armed departure. To the charges of the commissars that the arms might be used against the Soviet Government they replied that the Army Corps had voluntarily given up all excessive armament in Kursk and that the remaining weapons were needed for self-defence on the long way to Vladivostok. Assurances were given that the troops would not interfere in domestic affairs of Russia because they wished to get out of the country as soon as practically possible. But the commissars would not yield and harsh words were exchanged. The leaders of the Army Corps and the local Bolsheviks became seriously deadlocked for the first time.

In fact, Penza now became a centre of Moscow's drive aiming at stopping the movement of the trains of the Army Corps approaching from the west so that its troops could be disarmed. The commissars in Penza pressed particularly hard upon Antonov-Ovseienko in Kursk, west of Penza, who was issuing to individual trains written permissions to move towards Penza as soon as he received from them the voluntarily surrendered heavy equipment. Shortly after his return from the meeting of the military commanders, held in Moscow on March 19, Antonov-Ovseienko received a telegram from the Soviet of Penza demanding "not to enter into any agreements with the Czechoslovaks; the Sovnarkom had several times repeated instructions ordering their complete disarmament; your telegrams permitting partial disarmament complicate the matter."¹⁸

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be directed through Turkestan. Bonch-Bruievich and Antonov-Ovseienko argued that they could be still useful, hoping that the Bolsheviks would be able to enlist their support should the Central Powers launch a new offensive in the Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Czechs should be permitted to proceed to France through Siberia and Vladivostok, pleaded Antonov-Ovseienko, and no obstacles should be placed in their way. Obviously, he was speaking from his personal experience which he had gained with the Czechs in Kursk on March 16.

Replying to this suggestion Trotsky pointed out that in view of the hostile attitude of Japan towards the Soviet Government the situation in the Far East was dangerous. He even doubted the true purpose of the transfer of the Czechs through Siberia. He thought that the Allies, using the Czechs, could seize the whole Trans-Siberian railway and therefore it would be better to organize their transport through Archangelsk and Murmansk.⁹ The question of whether they should go armed or disarmed was not discussed.

From this report it would appear that Trotsky agreed to the departure of the troops of the First Army Corps from Russia, although he perhaps felt that the decision to let them go was wrong in view of his current negotiations with the French for military assistance.

But Trotsky was soon to reverse himself, in fact the next day. On March 20 the War Commissar received Sadoul and Assistant Military Attache of the United States, Captain E.F. Riggs, in an interview which had a profound effect upon the fate of the Czechs in Russia.

From fragmentary evidence it appears that the commissar and his visitors agreed, in general terms, upon the Allies assisting in organizing the Red Army; in concrete terms five American, thirty-eight French, ten Italian, and perhaps other officers, would participate in this effort.¹⁰ It seems that it was during this interview that Trotsky opened the question of departure of the Czechs and made a formal request that the Army Corps be left in Russia to serve as a nucleus for the reorganization of the Red Army.

The French Military Attache, General Lavergne, welcomed such a development and, as Sadoul enthusiastically reported to Thomas, the general "had been won over for co-operation with

the Bolsheviks in organizing their armed forces because he became convinced that it was possible, useful and necessary".¹¹

Against this background it is not surprising that the question of the departure of the First Army Corps from Russia was reopened on March 20, shortly after Trotsky's meeting with Sadoul and Riggs. Klecanda reported that on that day a serious disagreement appeared between Trotsky and Lenin regarding the policies of the government toward the Czechs. Trotsky argued that in view of the government's efforts at organizing its armed forces the permission granted to the Czechs to leave Russia should be withdrawn and their troop retained in the country. He said that he "had already requested the French not to transport the Czechs to France because the Bolsheviks would be organizing a new army and that the military operations would be renewed".¹²

Klecanda reports that two steps were undertaken as an upshot of the argument between Trotsky and Lenin, which resulted in the reversal of the government's permission granting a free exit to the First Army Corps from Russia.

First, those government officials were immediately dismissed who had permitted the two members of the National Council, one from the Prisoners of War Commission and the other from the Financial Commission, to depart for Omsk. These two men had left Moscow on March 19 or 20 to recruit for the Second Army Corps.

Second, the following telegram was dispatched to all local Soviets concerned: all trains transporting the Czechoslovaks must be stopped and the troops completely disarmed at once; the local authorities must sell no provisions and supplies to them and permit no telegraphic communication with their leadership in Moscow. The order originated in Trotsky's Department of Operations and was signed by its chief, A.A. Aralov, who was the principal assistant of the War Commissar.¹³

The reason for the argument of Trotsky with Lenin in order to reverse the earlier decision of the government and detain the First Army Corps in Russia became fully revealed on the next day. Speaking on March 21 at a meeting of the Moscow City Soviet the War Commissar revealed a government's plan of organizing a modern army of 300,000-500,000 troops as

soon as possible. Trotsky admitted that this was a tremendous task, but said that it must be undertaken to prepare for every eventuality. In view of this, Trotsky undoubtedly saw in the 40,000 troops of the First Army Corps, plus the troops of the Second Army Corps, a significant contribution to his effort. Moreover, the troops of the First Army Corps—already trained, organized and armed—would substantially buttress the existing military position of the Soviet regime which was not too good at that time.

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It was only after receiving a new order, this from Stalin, that the commissars in Penza approached the Czech leaders on March 23 with a demand that the troops must unconditionally and completely disarm.¹⁷ The leaders rejected this demand and invoked Lenin's permission of March 15 and 16 which had granted them a free and armed departure. To the charges of the commissars that the arms might be used against the Soviet Government they replied that the Army Corps had voluntarily given up all excessive armament in Kursk and that the remaining weapons were needed for self-defence on the long way to Vladivostok. Assurances were given that the troops would not interfere in domestic affairs of Russia because they wished to get out of the country as soon as practically possible. But the commissars would not yield and harsh words were exchanged. The leaders of the Army Corps and the local Bolsheviks became seriously deadlocked for the first time.

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policies of the government because the meeting of the military commanders, and Trotsky himself, knew well that Lenin had permitted the Army Corps to move fully armed. Because of this, and in view of the fact that the Czechs were voluntarily giving up a substantial part of their equipment at Kursk, he did not agree with the commissars in Penza demanding complete disarmament and warned Trotsky by a cable sent through Penza "to be careful with the Czechs, we shall need them".¹⁹

Because there was no way out of the impasse created by Aralov's and Stalin's orders fresh negotiations were initiated in Penza and Moscow on March 23. The leaders of the Army Corps were disappointed and bewildered and could not understand why the Soviet authorities reversed themselves so suddenly.

Dual Policy of the Government

The crisis within the Soviet Government over the Czech Question was the result of several factors which had accumulated during first weeks of March 1918. First was the transfer of the seat of the government from Petrograd to Moscow, which resulted in a severe administrative dislocation. Then came the shift of Trotsky from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of War. Finally was the fact that Trotsky did not participate in the negotiations of the government with Klecanda on March 15 and 16; he arrived from Petrograd in Moscow on March 17, one day after the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement between the two parties.

Trotsky's intervention in the issue of the departing Army Corps upon his arrival in Moscow was justified not only in terms of his new position of Minister of War who had plans with its troops, discussed earlier, but also in terms of his old position of Minister for Foreign Affairs because in that capacity he had been in charge of the Czechoslovak matters since December 1917.

At that time a group of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war—who had refused to join the Army Corps, accepted the political programme of the Bolsheviks and called themselves Communists—had functioned in the Department of International Propaganda within his Ministry of Foreign Affairs in

Petrograd. The department consisted of 435 men of various nationalities and its task was to publish newspapers and revolutionary material in several languages for distribution among prisoners of war, and recruit and train agents to be sent abroad to promote revolutionary activities in European countries.

This department was functioning within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs until Trotsky's arrival in Moscow, when its individual national groups were transformed into Foreign Sections of the Russian Bolshevik Party and became directly attached to its Central Executive Committee. The first section to be set up was of the Hungarians, then came a Romanian section, Yugoslav, Czech and, finally, a German section. To co-ordinate their activities a special body was formed, called the Federation of Foreign Sections of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Russia. Each section was represented on the executive committee of this federation by two delegates, and the committee functioned as a policy making and directing body which decided all political and organizational matters. First steps of this reorganization were laid upon Trotsky's arrival in Moscow, and the whole process was completed at the end of April 1918.

Hand in hand with the work of the Department of International Propaganda functioning within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs went activities of the Prisoners of War Commission, which had been established within the Ministry of Military Fronts in December 1917. The purpose of that commission was to distribute newspapers and propaganda material produced by the Department of International Propaganda in order to recruit prisoners of war of the Central Powers into the Red Guards. The Prisoners of War Commission had its branches functioning in those cities across Russia and Siberia which were known for a large concentration of prisoners of war.

Also within the Commission of Prisoners of War there functioned a group of Czech and Slovak Communists who canvassed among their nationals for recruits for the Red Guards and thus competed with the agents of the National Council recruiting for the Army Corps. Because the government was placing a high priority upon the recruitment for the Red Guards from among prisoners of war, the competition between the National Council and the Czech Communists was terminated in favour of the latter by a governmental decree published in

Izvestiia on February 7, 1918. The decree declared invalid all documents which had been issued to prisoners of war by the National Council and stated that only the Czechoslovak Communists or Internationalists could canvass among Czech and Slovak nationals but only for the Red Guards. Moreover, all future activities of the National Council must be brought under the control of the Federation of Social Democratic Prisoners of War, the Organization of Internationalists and the Soviet Government.

Strictly speaking, the last sentence of the decree challenged the entire legal and political status of the National Council and the Army Corps. Although it was impossible for the government to enforce it at once—because the Army Corps was the largest military formation on the entire territory of former Imperial Russia but at that moment deployed in the Ukraine which claimed independence from Moscow—the order is significant because it indicates that already in February 1918 the Soviet Government claimed exclusive jurisdiction over the Czechoslovak prisoners of war, placing their administration into the hands of the Czech Communists and Internationalists who functioned within Trotsky's Ministry.

The order was a consequence of the decision of the National Council of January 22, 1918 to remove the Army Corps from Russia, which had generated a dogged opposition from the Czech Communists working within Trotsky's ministry. These demanded that the Army Corps should not be permitted to leave the country to fight for imperialists in France, argued that some 45 per cent²⁰ of its 40,000 troops consisted of socialists who were being dragged to France against their will and that many of them, perhaps some 15,000, would join the Red Guards if the control of reactionary officers over them were removed.

It was with this understanding of the Czech Question that Trotsky arrived in Moscow on March 17, reconciled himself to the decision of the government of March 15 and 16 to let the First Army Corps leave Russia at the meeting of military commanders on March 19, but reversed himself the next day in view of his negotiations for an Allied military assistance. Hence the telegram of Aralov ordering an immediate suspension of the movement of all trains of the Army Corps on March 20, Trotsky's disagreement with Lenin on that day, and a complete

review of the Czech Question by the government in light of the new circumstances which were not favourable to the Czechs, as reported by Klecanda.

The fact that all principal leaders of the Soviet Government were then present in Moscow and could co-ordinate activities of their ministries and various semi-autonomous departments—like the National Sections of Foreign Communists, the Prisoners of War Commission, and the Organization of Internationalists—resulted in the reorganization which led to the establishment of the *Federation of Foreign Sections of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Russia*, and its attachment to the Central Executive Committee of that party. It is quite possible that the Czech Question forced the entire issue of this reorganization.

It was thus within this frame of reference that the Soviet Government now evolved a new policy towards the Czechs, which featured two prongs.

The first prong recognized the existing realities because the confrontation in Penza and elsewhere had brought home forcefully the point that the First Army Corps must be permitted to leave Russia. In the first place its leadership had rejected, through Cermak, Trotsky's demand that these troops should remain in the country. Second, the French through General Lavergne had concurred in that rejection. Third, the events in Penza following Aralov's order had clearly indicated that it was impossible to subdue these troops by force of arms as the military balance was in their favour. Fourth, if the troops could not be voluntarily or forcibly incorporated into the Red Army then it was quite clear that they could not be permitted to linger in Russia for long. The Army Corps was an integral part of the French army and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk permitted no Allied armed forces on Russian soil. All these factors then favoured a policy of letting these troops out of the country as soon as possible, but completely disarmed.

The second prong of the new policy of the Soviet Government towards the Czech Question developed from its current efforts to recognize the National Sections of Foreign Communists as the only representatives of their nationals living in Russia, either as settlers or prisoners of war, and place recruitment of prisoners of war into the Red Guards upon a new footing.

Regarding the Czechs, the reorganization entailed four

measures, which became implemented within days. First, the Czechoslovak Section was promoted into the Czechoslovak Communist Party and recognized as the only legitimate representative of all Czechoslovaks in Russia. Second, a Bureau of Czechoslovak Affairs was set up within Stalin's Ministry of National Affairs. Three, the Czechoslovak Communists were permitted free access to the troops of the First Army Corps in order to conduct a recruitment campaign for the Red Guards. The Czech Communists were insisting for a long time that the Army Corps was being dragged out of Russia against the will of the troops and that a substantial portion of them would join the Red Guards if "reactionary officers" were removed and a propaganda campaign for the red forces unfolded. Fourth, the National Council was deprived of permission to organize in Omsk the Second Army Corps; this would be now undertaken by the Czechoslovak Communists and the recruits incorporated into the Red Army.

Also the administrative competence of various departments of the Soviet Government dealing with the Czechoslovak affairs was overhauled. Stalin's Ministry of National Affairs would deal with the Czechoslovak Communists and political problems of the departing First Army Corps; the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, under Karakhan, would deal with matters relating to the Second Army Corps; and Trotsky's Ministry of War would be in charge of organizing the campaign for recruits for the Red Army from among the men of the First Army Corps.

It was against this background that the Czech leaders and the Soviet authorities initiated parallel negotiations in Penza and Moscow as a result of Trotsky's reversal and Aralov's order of March 20, which lasted three days and turned out a test of strength of the two parties. Maxa and Hurban, later joined by Markovic and Girska, conducted the talks in Penza. When matters became really complicated the team was reinforced by several members of the Presidium of the National Council, military commanders, and two French military representatives. Commandants Verge and Paris, attached to the Army Corps. The Bolshevik side was represented by Chairman of the Soviet of Penza District Commissar Kuraviev, and later by the whole Central Committee of Penza Soviet. In Moscow Klecanda represented the Army Corps during his numerous

conferences with Trotsky, Stalin, Karakhan and other Soviet leaders.

Both parties opened the negotiations by advancing their maximum demands. The Soviet Government, through Kuraviev, demanded complete disarmament of the Army Corps, while the Czechs insisted upon the fulfilment of Lenin's decision of March 15 and 16 letting them cross Russia and Siberia fully armed; they would disarm only in Vladivostok. Although the Bolshevik forces in Penza were no match for the fully armed and concentrated Army Corps, the Bolshevik negotiators felt in a strong position for they could trade space for lack of troops. There were hundreds of stations along the five thousand miles of the railway line from Penza to Vladivostok. If the military organization of the Bolsheviks could not bring the Czechs to heel then the distance, "technical difficulties", denial of supplies and continuous harassment could do so.

The Czechs in Penza proved no less adamant than the Bolsheviks in pressing their claim. The confidence and strength deriving from their military organization and a letter from Klecanda of March 14 written in Moscow on the eve of his negotiations with Stalin and Lenin, turned them into hard bargainers. Klecanda had reported to Penza that the members of the Presidium of the National Council, present at that time in Moscow, believed that a weak posture during the pending negotiations with the Bolsheviks would not only be ineffective but most dangerous. He and his colleagues were too far away from Penza to give a concrete advice, but in view of the internal cohesion of the Army Corps they had unanimously agreed that no degree of Bolshevik propaganda now being unfolded would affect the morale of the troops. In view of this, they urged their colleagues in Penza to take a hard line and negotiate from strength.²¹ The case was clear: the Army Corps wanted to get out of Russia as soon as practically possible and would disarm only in Vladivostok.

The Presidium of the National Council in Penza received another letter from Klecanda, of March 23, in which he reported upon the clash between Trotsky and Lenin and informed the Council about the content of Aralov's order of March 20. Commenting upon that order Klecanda added that the telegrams of the Soviet authorities which he had seen "convinced

me about the absolute necessity of keeping all your weapons because the Bolsheviks are not sincere. The manner in which they deal with us is a fraud and swindle."²² Both letters warned against falling into a trap of disarmament, hinted at the possibility of the Bolsheviks attempting to dissolve the Army Corps after disarmament, and insisted that only armed strength could guarantee its safe and speedy departure from Russia.

Although the impasse between the Bolsheviks and the National Council in Penza over the disarmament strained the friendly ties between them, it was resolved soon because both parties climbed down from their extreme positions to seek a realistic accommodation.

On the Czech side the National Council realized that in order to renew the movement of the trains towards Vladivostok concessions would have to be made: the troops would have to give up a large part of their weapons, the Council would have to guarantee that the troops would not interfere in domestic affairs of Russia, and all conditions of the Soviet authorities regarding technical aspects of the transportation would have to be met. It was a long way to Vladivostok.

It was the Czech side which opened the door to a settlement. All political, legal and military aspects of the problem and whether to disarm or not, were discussed in Penza for three days and nights until it became clear that the military considerations must prevail. On March 25 all military members of the Czech negotiating team arrived at a unanimous decision, in which the French representatives concurred, that "no military organization was strong enough to force its way through 10,000 kilometres of foreign territory without support from the rear". The Czech troops could reach Vladivostok "only in agreement with the Soviet Government and never without it".²³

Once the Czech leaders decided for an accommodation and informed the local Bolsheviks to that effect the latter pressed for complete disarmament. Members of the Penza Soviet argued that if the Czechs really wished to get out of Russia without interfering in her domestic affairs they could best prove this by giving up all arms, except a small number needed for defence "against attacks of unfriendly elements or criminal bands". The National Council first hesitated, but in the end accepted in order to make a step designed to win once for all

the confidence of the Soviet Government: it agreed to disarm the troops to a minimum to convince it that the Czechs entertained no hostile intentions against the Soviet regime. This was a grand gesture of goodwill, which was to have profound consequences for further development of Czech-Bolshevik relations.

Inspired by this noble intention the National Council agreed on March 25 to surrender four-fifths of all weapons in possession of the Army Corps and retain only 168 rifles and one machine gun per train; the military experts considered this a minimum required for self-defence against criminal bands and other hostile elements. It was agreed that the weapons would be surrendered in Penza to a mixed six-member Disarmament Commission, which would issue a written statement to each train to that effect and guarantee its free passage to Vladivostok. Although the railway administration in Penza did not wish to strain the capacity of the Trans-Siberian line, its officials estimated that at least 15 trains a day could be dispatched to get the entire Army Corps out of Penza within 5 days. The National Council calculated that at that rate its last train would reach Vladivostok at the end of first week of May.

The Bolsheviks in Penza were pleased by the goodwill of the Czechs and Kuraviev at once telephoned their disarmament proposal directly to Stalin, because it was within Stalin's ministry that the Bureau of Czechoslovak Affairs was under organization. Also the Soviet leaders in Moscow were pleased, for the Czechs had agreed to disarm without a serious trouble. Stalin himself cabled to the National Council in Penza on March 26 the text of an agreement which said that the government was satisfied with the proposal and that the movement towards Vladivostok could be resumed as soon as the "counter-revolutionary officers", meaning Russian officers in the ranks of the Army Corps, were dismissed. To circumvent the provisions of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty the government proved really accommodating: Stalin stipulated that the Czechs would not be transported as a "military formation" but as a group of free citizens who had a known number of weapons for self-defence. Kuraviev was to appoint a commissar to accompany each train and inform the government about all events connected with the transport.

The telegram of Stalin of March 26 and its terms became known as the Penza Agreement. It embodied the first prong of the new policies of the Soviet authorities towards the Czechs, which permitted them to resume the movement of trains of the First Army Corps out of Penza.

However, no time was lost in Moscow to put into effect the second prong of the government's policies towards the Czechs. This called for Soviet control over the troops of the Second Army Corps, a propaganda campaign to win to the Bolshevik cause the "proletarian element" of the First Army Corps so that this could be incorporated into the Red Army, and for the establishment of the Czechoslovak Communist Party as the only legitimate spokesman for all Czechoslovaks in Russia.

The Soviet authorities put forward their claim to the exclusive control over the Second Army Corps during Karakhan's interview with Klecanda on March 24. Klecanda argued with the commissar, who was in charge of Far Eastern Affairs, that in view of the work in progress in Omsk the Soviet Government should not insist upon disarmament of the First Army Corps in Penza. From every point of view it would be better to let the armed troops proceed to Omsk, where the weapons and equipment could be passed on to the newly formed units of the Second Army Corps.²¹ This solution would also substantially speed up the exit of the First Army Corps from sensitive areas of Central Russia and save all work and cost connected with the disarmament in Penza and then separate handing and transport of arms from Penza to Omsk.

Karakhan not only rejected this proposal, but confronted Klecanda with the new attitude of the Soviet authorities towards the Second Army Corps. Karakhan told Klecanda that the National Council could be in charge of the work in Omsk only if it would agree that the troops organized there would be an integral part of the Red Army and exclusively under the command of the Bolsheviks. To justify this new position the commissar said that according to the peace treaty there could be no other armed forces on Russian territory except those controlled by the Soviet Government.²²

The available record of this important conference is incomplete to indicate how Klecanda responded. He could have been hardly enthusiastic and probably rejected Karakhan's

proposal that these troops be placed under exclusive command of the Bolsheviks. Such an arrangement would have contravened the original terms under which Masaryk had contemplated to leave the Second Army Corps in Russia, which called for a comprehensive agreement regarding the command, jurisdiction and other matters. Moreover, the National Council represented a revolutionary movement of the Czechs and Slovaks struggling for national liberation which considered itself in a state of war with Vienna and Berlin, and it was hardly possible for Klecanda to surrender the command over this movement to a government which had concluded separate peace with the enemy.

Of course, Karakhan was right in arguing that the peace treaty permitted no troops on the territory of Russia except those controlled by the government, but he was not correct in demanding the exclusive control over the entire troops who would join the Second Army Corps. The reason was that these stood behind the political programme of the National Council and not of the Bolsheviks, and that there was no attempt of the government at a joint military effort in spite of the hints of Stalin and others that the government would ultimately renew the war against Berlin and Vienna. Those men who had sympathies with the Bolshevik cause were free to join directly the Battalions of Internationalists, or the Red Army, which were then under organization. Only such men should remain in Russia and submit to the control of the Soviet Government, as Klecanda was to tell Trotsky within a few days. In fact, the only correct solution of this problem in the new circumstances was to separate those who stood behind the National Council from those who espoused the Bolshevik cause, organize the former into the Second Army Corps and let it out of Russia while incorporate the latter into the red forces so that these could fight for the Bolshevik cause on the unfolding internal fronts of civil war. Or, as an alternative, the Bolsheviks and the Czechs should conclude an agreement about a joint action, visualized by Masaryk, which would then regulate the use of these troops for the renewed hostilities against Berlin, or else for working on the economic tasks geared to the war effort of the country. However, no offer was made by the government in this direction, as at that stage the govern-

ment was bent more on preservation of peace than on renewal of hostilities.

Because no agreement was reached between Karakhan and Klecanda on this important issue, Omsk became soon a scene of intensive competition between the National Council and the Soviet authorities for the allegiance of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war stationed in Omsk itself and its vicinity, each party campaigning with different purposes in mind.

While Karakhan, in putting into effect the second prong of the government's policies, claimed for the government the exclusive control over the troops of the Second Army Corps on March 24, it was Trotsky who advanced its claim to the right to conduct a propaganda campaign among the troops of the First Army Corps to recruit volunteers for the Red Army during his meeting with Klecanda.

Klecanda called upon Trotsky on March 27 and told him that all outstanding problems between the Czechs and the government had been settled through the Penza Agreement, which spelled out the terms of the departure of the First Army Corps from Russia. On hearing this the commissar became angry, made several telephone calls and generally behaved as if he were disturbed by the terms of the agreement. After failing to contact the desired parties he put forth a demand which came as a matter of great surprise to Klecanda. He not only reiterated Karakhan's view regarding the Second Army Corps, but demanded that the entire First Army Corps should remain in Russia. When Klecanda rejected this by pointing out that Lenin and the Soviet Government had permitted the First Army Corps to leave the country and that a new agreement had been concluded to that effect in Penza on the previous day, the commissar demanded that the troops must be completely disarmed because the legal position of the government permitted no foreign troops on the territory of the Russian Republic. The peace with the Central Powers must be preserved at all cost and as long as possible.²⁶ Moreover, said Trotsky, the regional Soviets in Siberia had been pressing the Central Government with an ultimatum threatening to dismantle the railway were the Czech troops allowed to proceed to Siberia. Trotsky added that these Soviets functioned as self-governing bodies, exercised full control over their respective territories

and therefore their demands must be respected."²⁷

When Klecanda rejected Trotsky's request for complete disarmament of the departing troops by referring to the terms of the Penza Agreement Trotsky said that he must demand, "in the name of the Soviet Government", from the National Council an agreement permitting the Czech Communist agitators to conduct a propaganda and recruitment campaign among the troops of the First Army Corps so that "its units could be dissolved and the men enlisted into the ranks of the Czechoslovak Red Army". Klecanda was astounded and retorted:

"In principle we would not object to agitation, particularly through printed word. But we could not permit you to organize an agitation and propaganda campaign directly among the troops and aiming at dissolution of our military organization.

Trotsky: You cannot expect us to force all those soldiers, who sympathize with us, to remain in your ranks.

Klecanda: No, we would not like this. But the Soviet Government should not organize a special Czechoslovak Red Army. Our people who sympathize with you stand behind Russian and not Czechoslovak political program and therefore should join the Russian and not the Czechoslovak Red Army."²⁸

Thus while Klecanda indicated that in principle the National Council would not object to agitation by the Czech Communists to recruit, through printed word, from the ranks of the Army Corps those who would wish to join the red forces, he was quite definite that an oral campaign organized directly among the troops and aiming at the dissolution of its units would be resisted.

It is intriguing why Trotsky, at this stage, said that the purpose of the campaign of the Czech Communists would be to dissolve the units of the Army Corps and not merely recruit only those who would wish to join the red forces. The common missar, obviously, laboured under the belief which was being incessantly drummed into his ears by the Czech Communists that the entire "socialist component" of the Army Corps, some 15,000 men, would join the Bolsheviks. As Minister of War

who faced the enormous task of organizing a new army of half a million men, as he himself had announced on March 21, Trotsky was lured by a vision of 15,000 recruits; he anticipated, as had the Czech Communists, a mass exodus from the Army Corps, dissolution of its units and thus disappearance of this body. Trotsky was a determined man, must have taken hard the rejection of his request by Cermak on March 22 that the Army Corps should remain in Russia, and probably felt that the rejection by Cermak and now Klecanda was not the last word in the matter.

Another important aspect of Klecanda's interview with Trotsky was the conduct of the commissar when Klecanda said that all outstanding matters regarding the departing troops had been settled and when he recounted the terms of the Penza Agreement, which entailed no other provisions except those regarding the disarmament and the removal of "counter-revolutionary" officers. From Trotsky's conduct it would appear that he was disturbed over the fact that the claim to the right of the government to sponsor the campaign among the departing troops had not been incorporated into the terms of the Penza Agreement. From the point of view of Klecanda the terms of the Penza Agreement, concluded on the previous day, were the touch-stone of the entire relationship between the National Council and the Soviet Government regarding the conditions under which the troops would be permitted to depart; the new suggestions and demands of Trotsky he did not consider part and parcel of that settlement. Also for Kuraviev and the Soviet in Penza the terms of the Penza Agreement were the only true conditions under which the departure of the First Army Corps had been negotiated, and in view of this he was to experience a minor crisis when told on April 3 by the Czech Communists that they had been authorized by Trotsky to conduct a campaign among the departing troops and presented with a demand that their movement be stopped at once.

Thus when Klecanda left Trotsky's office he saw two glaring contradictions in the policies of the Soviet authorities towards the Czechs. The first contradiction was between the Penza Agreement, permitting the First Army Corps to depart from the country on the one hand, and the fresh demands for a campaign

aiming at its dissolution on the other. The second contradiction was between his agreement with Lenin and Stalin, which permitted the National Council to organize the Second Army Corps in Omsk, and the demands of Karakhan claiming the exclusive Soviet jurisdiction over this body.

Klecanda left Trotsky's office with uncertain feelings about the true objectives of the Soviet Government, and although he believed that the Bolsheviks really wished to have a part of the First Army Corps out of Russia he was confused about the true purposes of the agitation—was it only to recruit volunteers or really to dissolve the Army Corps as Trotsky had indicated—, and about the fate of the Second Army Corps. When he reported upon the results of his negotiations with Trotsky and Karakhan to the National Council in Penza his uncertainty and anxiety became shared by all its members who until then had only a limited experience with the Soviet Government, and who believed that the Penza Agreement solved all problems of the departing troops.

To appreciate this frame of mind is of cardinal importance for a realistic understanding of subsequent development of relations between the National Council and the Soviet Government. This is particularly so in view of the fact that the subsequent complications in transportation and the activities of the Czech Communists tended to convince the Czechs that their suspicions about Soviet motives had a basis in fact and that the Penza Agreement was a mere ploy to facilitate first the disarmament and then the dissolution of their units. Such an interpretation, while not correct in the middle of March, was to invite understandably reciprocal counter-measures in April which further exacerbated the relations between the two parties.

Although Trotsky presented formally Klecanda with his demand for free agitation among the troops of the First Army Corps on March 27, he in fact had dispatched two small groups of such agitators to Penza and Samara on the previous day, as reported by *Prukopnik* on March 27, 1918, and without consulting the Czechs. Trotsky was impatient for quick results and shortly after their arrival his assistant, Commissar Boiarsky, from the Operational Department of the Ministry of War, cabled to the Soviet in Samara that his chief wished to know whether the agitation had already commenced and how many

recruits could be expected to join the Battalions of Internationalists. The Soviet in Samara answered that although the campaign had been mounted no substantial results were attained so far.²⁹ Trotsky then dispatched two new groups of Czech agitators from Moscow on April 2 to intensify the campaign, and these arrived in Penza and Samara on April 3.

In the meantime, the last element of the second prong of the new policy of the Soviet Government towards the Czechoslovaks had been initiated within Stalin's Ministry of National Affairs. The two Czech Communist groups co-operating with the Soviet authorities—one which originally functioned in Moscow since January 1918 and the other which arrived from Petrograd when the government shifted into the new capital—were now amalgamated and formed into the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which published the first issue of its newspaper *Pruckopnik* on March 27. The second number published on April 2 printed a key document called a "Declaration of the Communist Party", which formalized the relationship of the Soviet Government with the new party and transferred the authority concerning all Czechoslovak matters to this new body.

The declaration stated that "the recent developments in Russia placed the Communist Party at the helm of the Czechoslovak revolutionary forces" and, therefore, in the position of "the highest authority regarding all Czech affairs in Russia." This development was not an accident nor usurpation, stated the declaration: "the fact is that *the Soviet authorities now recognize the Communist Party as the only legitimate representative of all Czechoslovaks in Russia.*" The document further said that the control of all existing Czechoslovak organizations must be handed over to the Communist Party at once. Moreover, all Communist groups functioning in Russia must organize their members into military units, because "the Czechoslovak Red Army must be set up without delay."

While it is fair to assume that by this recognition the Soviet Government had authorized the Czechoslovak Communist Party to assert its control over the Czech and Slovak nationals in Russia and Siberia but not over the troops of the First Army Corps, for whose allegiance a campaign was to be organized, contrary interpretations soon were made by the Czech Communists. These insisted that the placing of their party in charge

of all Czechoslovak affairs not only meant the control over the prisoners of war and the existing political organizations but also entailed an immediate claim to the leadership of the Army Corps. As Krizek observed, "the real significance of this decision lay in the fact that the Czech Communist Party became the only authoritative representative of all Czechs and Slovaks in European and Far Eastern parts of Soviet Russia. The National Council thereby lost all its former rights."²⁰ The legal and political implications of such an interpretation of the declaration were really far-reaching.

Thus when at the beginning of April the initial stages of the second prong of the Soviet policies towards the Czechs were put into effect, the National Council and the troops became even more distrustful of the true purposes of the Bolsheviks than they had been after Klecanda's interviews with Karakhan and Trotsky at the end of March.

Some historians with a strong anti-Trotsky bias argue that it was Trotsky who set the policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs upon this ambiguous course, that in doing so he acted in complete disregard of Lenin's intentions and wishes, and that therefore he must be blamed for the misfortunes and hardship which the government had to face as a consequence of the ensuing confrontation with the Czechs.²¹ Such interpretations, as we have seen, are untenable in light of the circumstances in which the double-pronged policy of the Soviet Government was evolved after the arrival of Trotsky in Moscow, and in which the entire leadership participated.

Penza Agreement Implemented

As soon as Stalin's telegram was received in Penza the National Council hastened to carry out its provisions and rest of the conditions agreed upon orally with the Penza commissars. On March 27 the military command of the Army Corps issued Order No. 35 which stated that in view of the departure from Russia the Army Corps lost character of a combat formation, and that an agreement had been concluded with the Soviet Government whereby all surplus weapons would be surrendered. Only a small number of arms would be retained to protect the trains against criminal bands. On its part the government had

guaranteed a speedy and unobstructed transportation across Russia and Siberia and promised that the organization and unity of the Corps would be preserved. The order then gave detailed instructions regarding the number of arms to be retained and how the disarmament would be executed. It would begin on March 27 at 12 noon, and the movement would start as soon as the first train disarmed.

When the terms of the disarmament agreement became known to the troops the whole Army Corps became restless.³² The men were embittered by long and purposeless waiting in Penza and challenged the wisdom of their leaders in concluding such an agreement. They could not understand why the Soviet Government renegated on its own earlier promise of free and armed departure by demanding now disarmament. Both political and military leaders of the Army Corps had plenty to explain at a special meeting of officers and representatives of the Army Soviets convened in Penza on March 27; Maxa spoke for the political leadership, General Dieterichs for the military command and Commandant Verge for the French.

Maxa argued that the Soviet Government had made it quite clear to the Czech representatives in Moscow and Penza that if they wished to get their troops out of Russia they must disarm. Under no conditions would the Government permit the troops to be transported as an armed expeditionary force. The Soviet Government had refused to believe that the Czechs entertained no hostile intentions against it and as a proof to the contrary demanded disarmament. As long as the troops remained armed the Bolsheviks could not be convinced. Under those conditions a conclusion was inescapable that Vladivostok could be reached only in understanding and co-operation with the Soviet Government. The military experts therefore had recommended disarmament, which was communicated to the commissars in Penza. However, the National Council approved the resulting disarmament agreement only after the Soviet Government had guaranteed that the Army Corps would be transported to Vladivostok as a unit and without any further delay.³³

The commander of the Army Corps, General Shokhorov, attempted to dispel the general feeling prevailing among the troops that the Bolsheviks were in fact disarming the Army

Corps and that the agreement was a ruse. He said that "they are not disarming us, we are voluntarily giving up arms and only a part of them. There is plenty left in each train for self-defence." In a similar tone the Chief of Staff, General Dieterichs, attempted to pacify the men. He said that the Soviet Government had approved the transfer and promised assistance but requested that the arms be left in the country because in France Russian models would be useless. Commandant Verge told the meeting that the troops had received the arms when the Army Corps was a part of the old Russian army. This army was demobilized and therefore all weapons and equipment must be returned to the Russian Government. The question where the weapons would be given up was of secondary importance.³¹

From the speeches delivered at this meeting it would appear that the delegates were not told the true state of affairs. Although the National Council had Klecanda's letters of warning against disarmament and duplicity of the Bolsheviks, its leadership presented the issue of disarmament as if the burden of proof of goodwill was upon the Czechs, who had to win the confidence of the Bolsheviks. But the delegates could not be deceived and there was an uneasy air at the meeting. The delegates suspected some ulterior motives behind the sudden shift in the attitude of the Soviet Government and began to distrust their leaders. The explanation that the Bolsheviks demanded disarmament, because they distrusted the Czechs, was not convincing. When after the meeting the delegates returned to their trains stationed west of Penza and reported upon the background of the disarmament agreement, the confidence of the troops in the soundness of policies of their leaders was badly shaken and some small arms were hidden. This was the first instance of a rift between the troops and their leaders over the policies towards the Bolsheviks. The rift grew steadily, and in the course of a few weeks was to lead to an internal revolution within the Army Corps which deposed what appeared to the rebels a weak leadership.

Meanwhile, the Czechs and the Bolsheviks in Penza set out to implement the provisions of the disarmament agreement. Each side appointed three members to the Disarmament Commission which began working at noon on March 27. The Czech Command issued a supplement to Order No. 35 which called

upon the commanders of trains to collect all weapons, except those permitted by the agreement to remain in the hands of the troops, and seal them in special cars to expedite the disarmament. On its part the Soviet Government appointed Commissar Lukianov to accompany the Army Corps through Russia and Siberia to Vladivostok. He was to inform the local Soviet authorities all along the railway line about the purpose of the transport, dispel the fear that the Czechs would give armed aid to opponents of the Bolsheviks in Siberia and the Far East, and report all events to Moscow and Penza. The instructions of the government, ordering Lukianov to accompany the first train spearheading the movement towards Vladivostok, were concluded with an appeal addressed to all "revolutionary organs to render Comrade Lukianov all support in his task of securing the movement and safety of the Czechoslovak trains."³⁵

The appeal, and the fact that the National Council could avail itself at once of Lukianov's services, went a long way to convince its leaders present in Penza that the government was really earnest about the departure of the First Army Corps and that the troops could reach Vladivostok in about four weeks. They could not have known, however, that Klecanda was not so sure about the honesty of the government, who in the meantime negotiated with Karakhan and Trotsky in Moscow and left the office of the latter on March 27 uncertain about its true objectives because of the ambiguities introduced by the two commissars into the question of the departing troops which, in fact, profoundly modified the terms of the Penza Agreement.

In the meantime, however, the leaders in Penza, completely oblivious of the demands made by Karakhan and Trotsky to Klecanda, went ahead enthusiastically with the fulfilment of the terms of the Penza Agreement and also solved the problem of "reactionary officers" as Stalin had labelled the Russian nationals of the commanding staff. As soon as it appeared certain in January 1918 that the Army Corps would leave Russia, the National Council had approached the Russian officers with the question of whether they would wish to go along to France. The case of each officer was then considered and a decision made whether the Army Corps would further retain him on the staff. By the time of the Penza Agreement the final selection was completed and *Ceskoslovensky dennik* announced on March

28 that due to the impending resignation of a number of Russian officers new appointments to the commanding staff would be made soon. Order of the Day No. 37, issued on March 30, announced that almost all Russian officers had resigned and that only Czech and Slovak nationals had been appointed to the vacant posts.²⁴

Thus the entire command of the Army Corps, except the posts of the Supreme Commander and of two commanders of both divisions and their staff, was in the hands of the Czechs and Slovaks. Soviet studies dealing with the origin of the conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Czechs assign a sinister role to these Russian officers who remained in the Army Corps. The truth of the matter is that the command of individual regiments was fully in Czech hands and that later, when the decision was made to strike at the Bolsheviks, the Supreme Commander and his staff were suspended by a revolutionary upheaval precisely of Czech regimental commanders because these Russians refused to take any anti-Soviet action. Two Russian officers not suspended, General-Major Kolomesky, Commander of the Second Division and his Chief of Staff, Colonel Dorman, were themselves to resign because they believed that the Czechs could not succeed in forcing their way out of Russia against the will of the Bolsheviks.

Supply Arrangements

The permission to enter Siberia was only a partial solution of the problem facing the National Council in transporting some 40,000 men over a distance of five thousand miles. When Masaryk departed from Kiev in the morning of February 22 Chairman of the Financial Commission of the National Council, F. Sip, accompanied him to Moscow to take care of financial matters with the French and negotiate arrangements with the Soviet Government for supplying the trains on their long trek. Because plenty of money was needed for purchase of food, supplies and other provisions the French Embassy secured an over-all agreement with the Soviet Government on financing the Czechs. By this agreement the Soviet Government authorized Russian banks to pay to the French Consul in Moscow large sums of cash from the frozen French accounts to be passed on to the leadership of the Army Corps.

The first instalment of 2 million rubles, as a part of the French Government's loan to the Czechoslovak National Council, was paid by General Rampont, French Consul in Moscow, to Sip on March 7. Another 2 million rubles were paid to Sip on March 9; on March 25 he received one million more. Vice-Chairman of the National Council B. Cermak received one million on March 28; Sip was given another million on April 3. Thus from March 7 until April 3 the National Council received seven million rubles in cash. Four entries, without dates, in documents on the Czech-French financial transactions show that Sip further received one million, Cermak one million, Sip another million, and some other person 188,000 rubles. These undated payments amounted to 3,188,000 rubles, and together with the seven million paid previously the total sum advanced by the French to the National Council was 10,188,000 rubles. From the British Consul in Moscow the National Council received 80,000 pound sterling.²⁷

Regarding the purchase of supplies and provisions, Sip had to deal directly with the Soviet authorities. The problem had two aspects. In the first place, a comprehensive agreement had to be worked out with the Directorate of Siberian Co-operatives concerning the purchase of supplies at several key railway stations in Central Russia and Siberia. The Co-operatives functioned as autonomous bodies which controlled vast stores of supplies in Central Russia and Siberia and which had an extensive network of distribution outlets all over the territory through which the trains had to pass. The negotiations were initiated on March 18 and lasted several days. The Co-operatives were represented by nine directors; a representative of Moscow People's Bank was also present. According to the final agreement the Co-operatives were to establish a number of supply depots along the Trans-Siberian line in places selected by the command of the Army Corps in which food, supplies and other specified provisions would be available to the passing trains. The supplies were to be sold on credit extended to the National Council by the People's Bank, the over-all financial settlement to take place in Moscow after the entire Army Corps reached Vladivostok.

As soon as the Directorate of the People's Bank approved

the arrangement one of the directors of the Siberian Co-operatives informed the Soviet Government about the whole transaction and secured the necessary approval for its realization in the form of a written document. Sip had already secured an affidavit from the French Consulate underwriting the credit extended to the National Council by the Co-operatives and the People's Bank.³⁵

As soon as all these negotiations were completed the directors of the Co-operatives left Moscow to make arrangements for opening the supply depots in the selected places, while Sip left for Penza to participate in a meeting of the Supply Commission of the National Council convened on April 9. The Supply Commission, functioning in Penza, had an enormous task on hand and worked with zeal and imagination to overcome many difficulties. Once the negotiations in Moscow removed the financial and political obstacles and the Soviet Government consented to the sale of supplies the problem was chiefly organizational. Plans were made for sending an advance party of the commission with the first train spearheading the movement of the Army Corps to stop in Cheliabinsk, Omsk, Irkutsk and Chita. In these cities the men were to get in touch with members of the Directorate of the Co-operatives in order to work out details of the supply agreement concluded in Moscow and approved by the government.

The National Council, the Military Command and the Supply Commission placed special emphasis upon Omsk because in that city was to be the headquarters of the National Council during the transit of the First Army Corps to Vladivostok, and also because the Second Army Corps was under organization there for some time. The representatives of the National Council in Omsk worked with enthusiasm on that project, as the Bolshevik commissars kept on hinting that the Soviet Government would eventually resume the war against the Central Powers. Stalin had stated so to Klecanda on March 15, Karakhan on March 24, and Trotsky on March 27, 1918.³⁹

It is not surprising that after the completion of all preparatory work regarding the supplies for the First Army Corps, and having laid the groundwork for organization of the Second Army Corps, the National Council rushed with the fulfilment of the disarmament conditions of the Penza Agreement. The

Disarmament Commission started working on March 27 at noon, and within an hour or so the first train of the Fifth Regiment was disarmed. The commission then issued the following document to its commander to be shown to the Soviet authorities further on the way:

"This train was inspected by the Disarmament Commission of the Penza Soviet and, therefore, according to the orders of the Soviet of People's Commissars, it must not be searched and its movement stopped. In the name of the Soviet of People's Commissars, and according to its order, you are requested to render all assistance and co-operation to the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Army while in transit to Vladivostok."⁴⁰

As soon as this document was received a large party boarded the first train to ensure a smooth passage for the rest. Commissar Lukianov was to act on behalf of the Soviet Government and explain the purpose of the transportation. V. Girska and V. Houska, from the Military Commission, headed for Omsk to assist their colleagues in the organization of the Second Army Corps. Several members of the Supply Commission and the Financial Commission were to stop at selected stations to take care of supply problems. A number of other officials of the National Council also boarded this first train to deal with a variety of tasks. With such an assembly of officials there was no reason to expect any serious difficulties in transporting about 72 trains even over five thousand miles of the Eurasian continent.

The big clock at the Penza railway station struck 2 P.M. when the first train rolled away from the platform amid cheers of assembled Czechs and the Bolsheviks.

ROAD TO SURRENDER

The period following the conclusion of the Penza Agreement became one of great disappointment and anxiety for the Czechoslovaks because all basic assumptions upon which they had entered into that agreement were not fulfilled and Vladivostok remained a distant dream.

In the first place appeared the opposition of the Siberian Soviets against the entry of the Czech troops into their territories. To overcome this resistance Moscow abandoned the Penza Agreement, ordered to halt the movement of the trains which had already disarmed in Penza and demanded complete disarmament.

Second, the Czechoslovak Communists demanded from the Soviet in Penza to suspend the release of the disarmed trains from that city until each of them were screened for recruits for the Red Army.

Third, a new complicating factor appeared when the local Soviets east of Penza themselves, and on their own, began demanding further surrender of weapons from the trains before willing to release them further, in complete disregard of the letters of safe conduct which had been issued to them by the Soviet in Penza. These trains were stopped again and again and either complete or partial disarmament demanded as a price for letting them move any further. In each railway station new and exasperating negotiations had to be initiated to explain to the local Soviets the purpose of the transport and the terms of the Penza Agreement and offer assurances that no support would be given to anti-Bolshevik elements.

The fourth complicating factor became the interference of the Internationalists with the movement of the trains. The Internationalists were former prisoners of war of the Central Powers who had joined the Red Guards, exercised a great deal of influence upon the local Soviets because of their sheer numbers, and opposed the departure of the Czech troops from Russia on ideological and national grounds.

The fifth element became the telegrams of the German Government demanding repatriation of German prisoners of war from Siberia which made the Soviet Government to abandon Vladivostok as the port of exit for the Czechs, reactivate an old plan of using Archangelsk and Murmansk instead, and order the local Soviets to redirect the Czechs towards these two northern ports.

The cumulative effect of all these developments, surely some of them were completely beyond control of the government, was the fact that by the end of April only 15 trains had been permitted to leave Penza and that even their movement

was brought to a halt pending the redirection of the entire Army Corps towards the northern ports.

The Czechs reacted in two ways towards these complications. The National Council and the military command, in their anxiety to have the troops out of Central Russia as soon as possible, advocated accommodation to buy off by concessions the resumption of the transportation any time new demands were presented and, in fact, bargained off the terms of the Penza Agreement. The troops, on the other hand, boiled with anger, were reluctant to surrender additional weapons and advocated resort to arms as soon as possible to force the way to Vladivostok. They believed that the policy of accommodation pursued by the National Council and the continuous concessions would ultimately weaken the position of the Army Corps to such an extent that the Bolsheviks would be naturally emboldened to reach for a military solution of the Czech Question in an attempt to dissolve its units.

Complete Disarmament Demanded

Shortly after the conclusion of the Penza Agreement a new factor, the opposition of the Siberian Soviet against the entry of the Army Corps into Siberia, began to complicate the relations between the National Council and the government in Moscow.

On March 28 the Soviet in Irkutsk, controlling large territories of Central Siberia and therefore styled the Centro-Sibir, cabled to all Soviets west of Irkutsk up to Omsk, and to Moscow, that all trains transporting the Czech troops must be stopped at once. The troops must be completely disarmed and detained in the stations until the negotiation of the Centro-Sibir with Moscow would clear the direction of their further movement.

This cable of the Irkutsk Soviet threw the movement of the Army Corps to Vladivostok into utter confusion only two days after the conclusion of the Penza Agreement. The Soviet in Omsk, the capital of Western Siberia, cabled immediately after receiving the instruction from Irkutsk to Kazan on March 28 requesting the local Soviet to stop the trains, command disarm the troops and direct them toward Archangelsk.⁴¹ That the Bolsheviks in Irkutsk and Omsk really meant

business was clear from the instruction contained in the cable of the Omsk Soviet to Kazan which said that "all trains must be stopped at all cost, even by taking away their locomotives. You must mobilize all available forces to fulfil this task. We have already done so. Special detachments are being sent to take over rifles, machine guns and ammunition."⁴²

Another complicating element appeared on April 2, when Trotsky yielded to the Irkutsk Soviet and himself began demanding the complete disarmament of the Czechs in another violation of the Penza Agreement. Commissars Yermilaiev and Melnikov, upon Trotsky's order, telegraphed from Samara to Commissar Shishkonov in Penza on April 3 an instruction that all Czech troops must be completely disarmed and that no train transporting them armed would be received in Samara. They explained that on April 2 they had negotiated with Voznesensky in the Far Eastern Department of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow the question of how finally to treat the Czechs in light of the conflicting instructions of the Central Government and the Soviet in Irkutsk. Voznesensky, who dealt directly with Trotsky and the Soviet in Irkutsk, told them that a minute before he himself had talked with Trotsky on the topic and that the War Commissar had said that the Czechs could be admitted into Siberia but only in short trains and completely disarmed.⁴³

While the negotiations between Moscow, the Siberian Soviets and Samara were in progress, the first train left Penza on March 27 and passed through Syzran on its way to Samara without the leaders of the National Council having the slightest notion that the Soviet authorities had abandoned the Penza Agreement and that new instructions of Trotsky had gone into effect. Thus on April 2 the commander of the train in Syzran was requested to surrender all arms according to the 'new directives' of the government.⁴⁴ He was surprised and argued that only a few days before the National Council had concluded an over-all agreement with Moscow whereby the government permitted 163 rifles and one machine gun per train, that he had disarmed to that level in Penza and would not surrender any additional arms.

While the Soviet in Syzran, facing a superior force, let the train proceed to the east at the next station, Samara, the Soviet mobilized its entire manpower on April 3 to enforce Trotsky's

directive. The commander and his troops were bewildered. Particularly incomprehensible was the argument of the Samara Soviet that the Penza Agreement was no longer valid because it was superseded by fresh instructions of Trotsky.⁴⁵ No evidence is available to indicate what made the commander of the train in Samara adopt a submissive attitude. The record merely states that the political leaders accompanying this train decided, most probably after consulting some members of the National Council in Penza through telegraph, to surrender all weapons, except 30 rifles, in order to buy off the permission to resume the movement to Omsk. But in Omsk some rifles had to be given up and in Irkutsk all weapons and equipment, except 15 rifles, to secure movement to Chita.⁴⁶

No Disarmament

Soon, however, the National Council in Penza became alarmed by reports arriving from the trains spearheading the movement of the Army Corps to the east. Particularly disturbing was the evident mobilization of local Bolshevik forces and the concentration of the Czech Communists in all major railway stations through which the trains had to pass. The National Council in Penza felt that the suspension of the movement of the trains, coupled with the demands for complete disarmament, was not motivated by a fear of the troops interfering in internal affairs in Russia and suspected that a design lay behind the calculated separation of one train from another and the new disarmament demands. The experience of the past few days indicated, and the local Soviet officials openly said so, that the Penza Agreement was a dead letter and that in view of such a situation adequate measures must be adopted at once to safeguard the Army Corps.

In these circumstances the chief advocate of the policy of concessions towards the new demands of the Bolsheviks, Prokop Maxa, was overruled at a meeting of the National Council held in Penza on April 5, which adopted a memorandum protesting against the numerous violations of the Penza Agreement by the local Soviet authorities. The document stated that the National Council had promised not to interfere in domestic affairs of Russia and that it would be willing now to offer hostages to

DEPARTURE FROM RUSSIA

guarantee this pledge. The memorandum demanded, on the other hand, fresh guarantees of free and safe transport from the Soviet Government and, until this were received, the disarmament under the Penza Agreement would be suspended and no further arms surrendered.⁴⁷

This stiff policy adopted by the National Council in order to defend the terms of the Penza Agreement was immediately put into effect. The disarmament was stopped, the commanders of all trains were informed by special couriers about the new situation and a delegation was sent to call upon the Chairman of Penza Soviet, Commissar Kuraviev, to give him a copy of the memorandum and inform him about the measures adopted. Kuraviev was moved by the readiness of the Czechs to defend the terms of the Penza Agreement, impressed by demonstration of their forces effectively displayed at the railway station and in the city and reported so to Trotsky.

It seems that the stiff opposition of the National Council against the new disarmament demands, and a similar demonstration of force experienced by all Soviets dealing with the Czechs in Central Russia, once again made Trotsky reverse himself with regard to the conditions of transportation of the Army Corps because he issued the following order on April 7:

"The movement of the Czechoslovak trains eastward is permitted. It must be executed in such a way as not to obstruct other transportation. The stipulation and implementation of these conditions is left entirely in the hands of competent railway authorities. The local Soviets and railway authorities are hereby assigned the task of rendering all assistance to the Czechoslovaks. Any arbitrary and violent acts on the part of the Czechoslovaks, and seizure of material, trains and locomotives, and any violence against railway personnel, would result in an immediate suspension of the movement of the train in question and its complete disarmament. The commander of such a train must be arrested by local Soviet authorities."⁴⁸

This new directive of Trotsky seemed to indicate that the Soviet authorities had finally reconciled themselves to the departure of the First Army Corps from Russia and would

honour the provisions of the Penza Agreement. This was the impression gained by the delegation of the National Council during its visit with Kuraviev on April 7, who gave them a copy of Trotsky's cable. Kuraviev further explained that the suspension of the transportation and the new disarmament demands in Samara, and other places, were due to misunderstanding and "technical difficulties" and had no political background. He denied that Trotsky had ever instructed the local Soviets to disarm completely the Czech troops.

The impression that the Soviet Government would now honour the terms of the Penza Agreement rapidly faded away when Kuraviev stated that although the government had permitted the troops to leave Russia it would prefer them to remain in the country to reinforce the Bolshevik armed forces. The delegates were taken aback when he further requested them to permit those who might wish to remain in Russia to depart freely from the Army Corps and guarantee to the Czech Communist agitators, who had arrived from Moscow on April 3 and 4, free access to the troops.⁴⁹ A similar request, as will be recalled, had been presented by Trotsky to Klecanda on March 27, which now had to be implemented locally. At that time Klecanda had told Trotsky that the Czech leadership would not object to a campaign through printed word, but that a campaign aiming at the dissolution of the units would be resisted.

Although the National Council was greatly disturbed by the violation of the Penza Agreement by the Soviet Government, and the request for agitation was one of them, a decision was taken on April 7 that the request would be granted. The reason was a hope that such a permission, coupled with the instructions of Trotsky, would speed up the movement of the trains, the main concern of the National Council.

The correctness of this assumption became corroborated by the developments taking place at all railway stations in which the trains of the Army Corps were halted. Trotsky's order of April 7 made the local Soviets cease demanding further disarmament and set the trains rolling to the east again. The National Council received cables to that effect from Samara, Cheliabinsk and other places during that day.⁵⁰

In view of this much improved situation, the National

DEPARTURE FROM RUSSIA

Council withdrew the memorandum concerning the suspension of disarmament later on April 7 and ordered the trains in Penza and west to begin disarming according to the terms of the Penza Agreement.⁵¹ The Disarmament Commission started to work immediately and within a few hours a number of trains departed from Penza for Samara. To reciprocate and please the Soviet Government the command of the Army Corps issued an order on April 8 which extended protection to the Czech Communist agitators and propagandists, who now freely descended upon the troops disarming in Penza.

Trotsky's cable of April 7 worked like a magic wand. In Samara, and beyond, a swift movement of the trains was renewed; these were permitted to travel at the speed of passenger trains and without having to stop in small stations. The Samara Soviet even informed the National Council in Penza that Samara would increase to four trains a day the number of trains to be received from Penza and dispatched to Cheliabinsk, because Omsk was prepared to receive that number from Cheliabinsk.⁵² Because until that date only 12 trains, out of 72, had been permitted to leave Penza since the conclusion of the Penza Agreement the National Council hoped that if this new arrangement lasted, and were the trains dispatched at the rate of four a day, the last train would leave Penza in approximately twelve days, around April 19. The ambitious task of transporting the 40,000 men over 5,000 miles of foreign territory seemed, at this moment, a practical possibility again.

Movement Stopped Again

And again the hopes of the Czechoslovaks were shortlived. During the night from April 9 to 10 the telegraph wires carried the following message from the Oblast Soviet of Western Siberia in Omsk to all Rayon Soviets, the Central Government in Moscow and all commissars in charge of military transportation:

"The Oblast Soviet of Western Siberia hereby orders the following addendum to the telegrams of March 20, No. 8116, and March 26, No. 8119, which were addressed to all commissars in charge of military transportation:

The transportation of all Czechoslovak trains to Siberia must immediately be stopped; it is desirable to keep the trains dispersed. Their accumulation in railway junctions must be averted. To prevent any deliberate forward movement the locomotives must be taken away. All means must be used to stop the movement of these trains. The Soviet of Western Siberia in Omsk, and the Oblast and the Okrug Staffs of the Red Army, must be advised on the number of trains in each locality.

No. 813.24

Oslopov,
Chairman of the Soviet."⁵³

Oslopov's cable threw the transportation of the Czechs into a new confusion two days after Trotsky's instructions of April 7 had permitted them to enter Siberia. There is no evidence available to indicate what motivated the Soviet in Omsk. The most probable explanation is offered by *Ceskoslovensky dennik* on April 11. An article entitled "New Obstacles" explained that the new suspension of the transportation had probably been motivated by security considerations of the Soviet in Omsk and not by a new reversal of the central government. The author said that the Soviet in Omsk must be in some difficulties because not only the trains of the Army Corps but all trains, even with Russian refugees and freight train, were stopped on the line between Samara and Omsk. In addition, the Soviet authorities started to evacuate Samara westward in direction of Penza. The article concluded that the Japanese landing on April 5, the aim of which was unknown, or operations of Dutov's Cossacks were perhaps the main causes of these new difficulties in the transportation of the Army Corps east of the Volga River.

The National Council in Penza was disturbed by the sudden and unexplained suspension of all transportation in Samara and eastward. As no information could be obtained in Penza, the Council decided on April 10 to dispatch a delegation to Samara to investigate the situation on the spot. The delegation consisted of Maxa, Markovic and Janik. Another delegation—consisting of Pavlu, Klecanda and two members of French Military Mission, Commandant Verge and Major Paris—was dispatched to Moscow to lodge a protest with the Soviet Government against the continuous interruptions of the trans-

portation and the numerous violations of the Penza Agreement and enlist the support of the French.⁵⁴

The intervention in Samara was successful. The delegates were told that the telegram of Oslopov was a misunderstanding, and that the Soviet in Omsk in some mysterious way had received the old order of Aralov of March 20 which demanded the immediate halt and disarmament of their trains. The delegates refused to believe the story, but settled for an arrangement whereby Oslopov's order was cancelled on April 12; moreover, the Samara Soviet promised to receive four trains a day from Penza and then immediately release them towards Omsk.⁵⁵

To make sure that the Omsk Soviet would receive all trains released by Samara Maxa demanded that the Soviet in Samara should clear the matter with Omsk. The commissars in Omsk obliged and on April 12 Maxa telegraphed to his colleagues in Penza that the staff of the Red Army in Omsk would admit into Siberia four trains a day without interruption.⁵⁶

Moreover, before granting this permission the authorities in Omsk had cabled to the Soviet of Irkutsk to make sure that the trains received in Omsk from Samara and Penza, and then dispatched towards Irkutsk, would be received there by the Soviet which in the past had been the staunchest opponent of entry of the Czechs into Siberia. To great satisfaction of the delegation negotiating then in Samara the Bolsheviks in Irkutsk complied and, as a result, the Omsk military authorities dispatched to Samara a copy of a cable from Irkutsk on April 12 stating that the latter would receive all trains released by the Soviet in Omsk.⁵⁷

This co-operative attitude of the Soviet in Irkutsk opened the way for the trains on the eastern section of the Trans-Siberian line east of Omsk. A fresh movement west of Omsk became possible by a cable of the Soviet in Syzran, which on April 12 informed Penza that Syzran would receive three trains from Penza every day.⁵⁸ Thus late afternoon of April 12 the whole Trans-Siberian line from Penza through Syzran, Samara, Omsk, Irkutsk and beyond was open for the movement of the trains of the First Army Corps, and in the evening of the same day its trains began to leave Penza eastward. With the business in

Samara successfully concluded Maxa and Markovic proceeded to Omsk and Janik returned to Penza.

Meanwhile, the first train spearheading the movement towards Vladivostok was approaching Irkutsk. The special appointee of the Soviet Government accompanying it, Commissar Lukianov, was informed by a cable of Maxa about the difficulties which the Czechs were experiencing in Central Russia—Penza, Syzran and Samara—and in the capital of Western Siberia, Omsk. The commissar was indignant and on April 12 telegraphed from Kransnoyarsk to the Soviet in Penza his surprise that so far only 12 trains had been permitted to depart from Penza. He said that such a slow progress contravened the orders of the Central Government regarding the speediest exit of the Czechs from Russia, particularly because the Siberian line was prepared to accept four trains a day. He urged the Penza Soviet to issue instructions to all railway authorities to expedite the departure of the Czechs from Penza.⁵⁹ It is difficult to say whether the commissar was aware of a number of shifts which the Central Government had executed in its attitude towards the Czechs since the Penza Agreement; most probably not.

Meanwhile, the first train with Lukianov, V. Girska and V. Houska passed Irkutsk. On April 14 both officials reported to the National Council in Penza from Mysova, a station way beyond Irkutsk and east of Lake Baikal, that on April 13 their train had passed through Irkutsk and was proceeding *via* Chita and Khabarovsk to Vladivostok because the Manchurian line was not operating. They further reported that cordial relations had been established with the Soviet in Irkutsk and that they called upon the representatives of the French Government there. The Bolshevik authorities not only showed themselves very friendly but made at once all necessary arrangements to secure the movement towards Vladivostok. The railway was in an excellent shape and its administration functioned smoothly, concluded their report.⁶⁰ The Soviet in Irkutsk opened the western approaches to Siberia on April 12 perhaps only after its experience with Girska and Houska, who on that day were in Irkutsk and convinced the Bolshevik leaders that there was nothing to fear.

For the Czechs to get to Irkutsk was not an easy matter.

This is evident from another letter of Girsu and Houska, describing the difficulties encountered in leading the movement of the Army Corps to the east. The letter was written on April 7 somewhere between Omsk and Novonikolaievsk and was reported in *Ceskoslovensky dennik* on April 16, 1918:

"These negotiations are really tiresome. The local Soviets do not trust us; they are afraid of us. The Central Government in Moscow commands very little authority in these parts. The individual Republics work at cross-purposes. The lack of weapons in Siberia is a powerful incentive for the Siberian Bolsheviks to get them from us . . . In order to keep you informed we are dispatching cables to you, and the Central Government in Moscow, twice a day. The Siberian Government (Omsk, probably, *Ed.*) would welcome our trains under the condition that we make short stops, and that at any one time only one train would be permitted into one station. Every station would receive and dispatch four trains a day . . . 'The railway line is in excellent order. All Soviet authorities assured us that we shall reach Vladivostok without any difficulty' . . ."

The opening of the whole Trans-Siberian line by the successful personal diplomacy of the delegations in Samara, Omsk and Irkutsk understandably produced an optimistic mood among the Czech leaders. This was expressed in a letter written by Maxa on April 14 from Omsk to his colleagues in Penza. Reporting upon his successful negotiations Maxa stated that it seemed unlikely that there would be any serious difficulties in the movement like those experienced so far. Should some appear, however, those could be only of a technical nature or due to complications which the Far Eastern Soviets might have with anti-Bolshevik elements. In both cases the Czechs must not use force. The only way to proceed in such situations would be patience, explanations and negotiations. He suggested that the Penza Agreement should be invoked and, should the Bolsheviks not yield, the Czechs should bargain and perhaps surrender some arms to placate the local authorities.⁶¹

To maintain a continuous movement eastward, even at the cost of surrender of additional arms, became the main goal of

Maxa after his successful experience with the Soviets in Samara and Omsk.

New Demands

It was a rude shock for the National Council in Penza to receive, shortly after Maxa's optimistic letter, a cable from Zlatoust on April 17 in which its representative F. Smid rang an alarm. The cable said that on that day the Zlatoust Railway Office had received telegraphic instructions from Commissar Sagaydochin from Samara, who commanded a Battalion of Internationalists there, to the effect that all trains transporting the Czechs must be immediately disarmed down to 30 rifles per train. Smid wished to know what to do regarding this request.⁶² The matter of instructions to be sent to Smid was subject of an animated discussion at the headquarters of the National Council in Penza. The fact that the order had been issued by a commander of the Internationalists called for caution. The meeting decided that in principle Smid should not yield and invoke the Penza Agreement.⁶³ It was further decided that in view of Maxa's advice to keep the trains rolling Smid perhaps should, as a last resort, buy off the goodwill of the Bolsheviks by surrendering some arms but reject the demanded disarmament down to 30 rifles.

Instructions to that effect were dispatched also to Klecanda in Moscow, requesting him to lodge a strongest protest with the government against the continuous violations of the Penza Agreement, but at the same time authorizing him to negotiate a further surrender of arms to expedite a rapid movement of those trains which had already been disarmed once under the Penza Agreement. Accordingly, Klecanda told Trotsky that although the Czechs would agree to give up additional arms they would not disarm down to 30 rifles per train as demanded by Samara. Klecanda was further authorized to negotiate with Trotsky a modification of the Penza Agreement itself to the effect that the number of rifles the Czechs could keep could be reduced to 100 per 1,000 men, plus one machine gun.⁶⁴

Hardly the leaders in Penza dispatched the instructions to Smid and Klecanda when a new cable, this time from Krasnoyarsk, the most eastern flank of the train column in Central

Siberia, brought a report which was difficult to reconcile with the friendly attitude which the Siberian Soviets had shown to Maxa only a day or so before. The representative from Krasnoyarsk, K. Kroutil, cabled that on April 14 the Krasnoyarsk Soviet had received the following telegraphic instructions from the Soviet in Irkutsk:

"To the Krasnoyarsk Soviet. To Commissar Personsom. According to instructions from Moscow all Czechoslovak trains must be immediately and unconditionally disarmed. The Czechs could retain only a minimum of weapons needed for protection of their funds and supplies. All machine guns must be taken away. Each train could retain only 15-20 rifles and a few rounds of ammunition. There is no need to negotiate this disarmament with the representatives of the Czechoslovak National Council. For the Centro-Sibir: Jakovlev."⁶⁵

The members of the National Council in Penza were puzzled by this new shift in the attitude of the Bolsheviks, their persistent requests for further disarmament beyond the terms of the Penza Agreement, and the instruction that the trains be approached individually, without a negotiated agreement with the National Council. From the telegram it was certain that the drive for disarmament in Central Russia and Siberia was sponsored by the Central Government, and that it was not merely a caprice of the local Soviets hungry for weapons. The instruction to by-pass the National Council and disarm the trains individually down to 15-20 rifles had sinister implications.

Leaving aside for the moment a detailed discussion of the factors which had precipitated the new disarmament demands of the Soviet Government, it is important to note how the Czech leaders responded to this new situation.

It will be recalled that Maxa set the policies of the National Council regarding the new demands of the Bolsheviks upon the road of concessions. At one point he even wrote to Penza that "the less weapons we have the better for our movement."⁶⁶

Now Maxa took the matter of concessions to the Bolsheviks into his own hands. On April 17 he cabled instructions from Omsk to F. Blaha in Samara, to be transmitted to Smid in

Zlatoust, because the latter had demanded advice how to meet the Bolsheviks' request for arms. Maxa instructed Smid to keep the trains rolling and, in view of this, advised that all demanded weapons should be surrendered; Smid, should, however, secure a disarmament certificate as it was certain that more weapons would be demanded by the Soviets further east.⁶⁷

In his haste to renew the movement almost at any price in terms of weapons Maxa contravened the instructions which the National Council in Penza had dispatched directly to Smid in Zlatoust. The result was a great confusion in which the troops in Samara, Zlatoust and elsewhere complied with Maxa's instructions and surrendered whatever number of weapons demanded by the local Soviets.

Maxa was so convinced about the effectiveness of his policy of concessions that he even abandoned the last agreement negotiated by Klecanda with Trotsky upon instructions of the National Council, and himself concluded a new arrangement with the Soviet in Omsk on April 18 in which the Soviet of Irkutsk concurred. On that day Maxa sent the following telegram to all commanders of the trains in Cheliabinsk, Zlatoust, Ufa, Samara, Syzran and Penza:

"Upon instructions of, and in agreement with, the Soviet in Irkutsk the Staff of the Red Army of Western Siberia in Omsk sent the following order to all Military Commissars along the line up to Penza: 'Please do not disarm the Czech trains. They will be disarmed in Omsk and Irkutsk; each train will be permitted to retain 20 rifles. Military Commissar Fursov.' Please inform all our trains about this directive so that they could comply with it. All machine guns will be surrendered in Omsk; all rifles, except 20, in Irkutsk. Maxa."⁶⁸

The events immediately following Maxa's new disarmament agreement with the Omsk and Irkutsk Soviets destroyed, however, his hope that by a promise of additional disarmament in Omsk and Irkutsk it would be possible to induce the Bolsheviks in the crucial Central Russia to let the Czechs retain all weapons permitted by the Penza Agreement and renew the movement at the same time. The fallacy of this assumption became

apparent with a tragic suddenness when shortly after receiving Furtsov's cable of April 18 the Soviet authorities in Samara, Syzran and Penza, precisely in the critical area, began demanding an immediate disarmament down to 20 rifles and no machine gun per train.⁴² The conditions stipulated in Furtsov's and Maxa's cables—that the trains should be dispatched with the arms permitted under the terms of the Penza Agreement, that machine guns would be surrendered in Omsk and that disarmament to 20 rifles would be executed only in Irkutsk—were ignored. The Bolsheviks in Central Russia demanded disarmament down to 20 rifles there and then before letting the trains move. Maxa's well-meaning arrangement with the Omsk and Irkutsk Soviets thus badly backfired.

The available records of the Army Corps are conspicuously silent about Maxa's attitude when he saw the basic assumption of his hope blown to bits, i.e., that it would be possible to solve the existing impasse by a speedy and armed escape from the increasingly hostile activities of the Bolsheviks and the Czech Communists in Central Russia by a promise of almost complete disarmament further east and out of the dangerous area. The feelings of other members of the National Council are also not known. From the manner in which the individual trains between Penza and Samara responded to the demands of the Bolsheviks it would seem that their commanders had been advised to comply with the new disarmament requests in order to lift the ban on the movement of their troops. This not only to move as fast as possible from the dangerous area, but also because of the increasing restlessness of the troops who in the meanwhile became openly hostile towards the Bolsheviks. Initially, the men refused to disarm convinced that their trains would become easy targets once deprived of the only guarantee of security—weapons. Hundreds of stations separated Penza from Vladivostok and an attack could be mounted in any of them. In the end, however, they submitted and surrendered the requested arms. The transportation was renewed at a heavy price.

There was no rejoicing at this renewed forward movement. The troops viewed the situation with the greatest apprehension, convinced that were the trains stopped again and pressed with new demands a fight would be unavoidable. Many of them

wondered whether the renewed movement under such extremely adverse conditions was not a trap and whether it would be possible to repel, with so few arms, any encroachment at the next station. The prospects appeared not too good.

An entry in the Chronicle of the Seventh Regiment throws some light upon these feelings of the troops:

"The interruption of transportation, the deliberate isolation of our trains by the Soviet authorities and the requests for disarmament confirmed the suspicion of soldiers that the Bolsheviks entertain sinister designs against our trains and that the exit from Russia might not be an easy matter at all. The soundness of the appeasement policy and the question of disarmament became the subject of a public debate. The soldiers feel that their safety could be ensured only through sufficient arms, and that Vladivostok could be reached only with arms in hand . . . Though submitting to the disarmament orders of their leadership the troops are convinced that the Soviets entertain hostile, but for the moment covert, schemes. The soldiers and officers feel alike that in view of the difficult times ahead weapons are essential."⁷⁰

For Maxa, however, the important thing was that the wheels of the trains rolled again because since the time of the conclusion of the Penza Agreement on March 26, until April 15, only 12 trains had been permitted to leave Penza while the rest of them remained crammed at several railway approaches west of this city. In spite of the heavy concessions to the Bolsheviks which bargained away the Penza Agreement, the National Council looked with satisfaction upon the fact that the road to Vladivostok was finally open and prospects were good that the troops would reach that port with a delay of only two weeks against the original plans.

Final Impasse

While the trains disarmed down to 20 rifles were permitted to leave Penza, Syzran and Samara in the direction of Omsk a new and unexpected development blocked their entry into

Siberia. This development led to the final impasse in the transportation of the Army Corps because the Soviet Government gave up Vladivostok as the port of their embarkation and instead changed, unilaterally and without consulting the Czechs, the direction of movement of their trains, ordering them now towards the northern ports.

The development in question was a demand of Berlin that all its prisoners of war in Siberia should be concentrated in Central Russia so that their exchange and repatriation could be initiated. This demand of Berlin was communicated by Chicherin to the Soviet of Krasnoyarsk on April 21, which on its basis refused to receive any trains and ordered all stations in Central Russia to stop immediately their further movement. Chicherin's telegram read:

"Moskva, April 21, 1918. No. 1084. To the Krasnoyarsk Soviet. Being afraid of Japanese attack upon Siberia Germany requests an immediate commencement of evacuation of German prisoners of war from Eastern to Western Siberia or European Russia. Use all possible means. It is not necessary to transport the Czech forces to the East.

Chicherin."⁷¹

The commissars of the Soviet in Krasnoyarsk, a town between Omsk and Irkutsk, could not understand the sudden change of Moscow's orders concerning the movement of the Czech troops, for only on April 18 an over-all transportation agreement had been announced by the Soviets of Irkutsk and Omsk and approved by Moscow. If the Czechs were not to be sent eastward where would they go? Chicherin's instructions and Berlin's request thus introduced an entirely new element into the bewildering tangle which developed since the Penza Agreement in their transportation to Vladivostok.

When Maxa was informed about Chicherin's telegram he refused to believe that its last sentence was genuine. He thought that it had been inserted into its text by someone hostile to the Czechs. He even requested the Soviet in Krasnoyarsk to verify in Moscow the authenticity of that instruction.⁷² Moscow promptly answered this inquiry through Chicherin himself:

"Moskva, April 22, 1918. No. 16-330. In response to your inquiry No. 250, please be informed that according to instructions of the Commissariat of War the movement of the Czech troops toward the east must be stopped and directed toward Murmansk. Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. No. 220.

Chicherin."⁷³

We do not know Maxa's immediate reaction. The record shows that he cabled to Lukianov, now approaching Vladivostok, and then to Trotsky and Chicherin, requesting them to cancel the instructions contained in the two cables of Chicherin. From his letter written shortly thereafter to Penza it appears that he was still convinced of the correctness of his own policy. The letter said that the numerous interruptions of the movement and various demands of the local Soviets experienced so far must be explained to the troops as caused by "technical difficulties". Until the real reason is fully ascertained no political motives should be attributed to Berlin's request. Otherwise the troops "might begin fighting the Red Army and the German and Austrian prisoners of war in its ranks".⁷⁴

Maxa's efforts to renew the movement in Siberia were not successful. Equally in vain were the attempts of the National Council in Central Russia. The Siberian Soviets simply refused to receive the trains and, moreover, requested the Soviets in Central Russia to stop their movement also there. Here and there the commanders of individual trains induced the local Bolsheviks to let them proceed a station or two by surrender of arms, money, food, and other concessions, even bribery. Much depended upon local conditions, number of Bolshevik forces, temperament of each commander and mood of his soldiers. At the end of April even this sectional movement was stopped and the individual trains, now spreading over several hundred miles between Penza and Irkutsk, stood immobilized in railway stations and engulfed by unfriendly Bolsheviks.

At the end of April the distribution of the trains was the following. Since the Penza Agreement and until April 15 only 12 trains had been permitted to leave Penza. The first of these arrived in Vladivostok on April 28, while the rest was moving

along the Amur line beyond Khabarovsk. From April 15 until April 30 altogether 43 trains left Penza; these were scattered at several points between Penza and Irkutsk. The most unfortunate men were those in the trains in or west of Penza; 17 trains formed this western most section.⁷⁵ The magnitude of problems connected with supplies, communication and various transportation regulations can be seen from the fact that between Penza and Vladivostok functioned seven different railway administrations.

In their final efforts to renew the movement the Czech leaders attempted to convince the local Soviets that this would in no way obstruct the repatriation of Berlin's prisoners of war from Siberia into Central Russia. The Czechs argued that it would take some time to have the repatriates concentrated from distant camps at suitable railway heads, and that before this could be accomplished the trains of the Army Corps would be well beyond Chita on their way to Vladivostok. The arrangements which would have to be made to recall all trains west of Omsk and redirect them towards the northern ports would far more complicate the repatriation of German nationals. First, the trains of the Army Corps would congest the railway lines in Central Russia where the repatriates from Siberia had to be concentrated; and second, they would obstruct the transport of those repatriates arriving into Central Russia on the Archangelsk and Murmansk lines which were in a very poor shape and unlike the Magistral.

In rejecting this pleading the Soviet leaders invoked alleged complications existing on the eastern sections of the Trans-Siberian line. The Soviets in Central Russia alleged that they could not let the trains go unless assured by the Soviet of Western Siberia that they would be received. The West Siberian Soviet in Omsk argued in turn that whether or not to receive the trains depended upon the Soviet of Central Siberia in Irkutsk. And the commissars in Irkutsk told the representatives of the National Council that the trains could not be admitted into Siberia because the Amur Railway was damaged by spring thaw and that the Manchurian Railway was closed because of military operations against Semenov.⁷⁶ The Bolsheviki in Irkutsk also alluded to a possibility of the Czechs assisting Semenov and his Cossacks in their attempts to over-

throw the Soviet regime in Chita and Karymskaia.⁷⁷ To dispel the fear of the Irkutsk Bolsheviks the National Council gave a memorandum to the Soviet in Omsk on April 30 for transmission to Irkutsk, which said that it was ridiculous to suspect its troops of a design of joining anti-Bolshevik forces in the Amur district. Had the Czechs wished to fight the Bolsheviks they could have done so a long time before and in places more crucial for the very existence of the Soviet regime. Their aim was France and not an involvement in domestic affairs of Russia.⁷⁸

In spite of these assurances the Bolsheviks in Omsk and Irkutsk remained adamant and refused to admit the Czechs into Siberia. The following evidence shows, however, how baseless were the excuses that the Amur railway was out of commission and that transportation on the Manchurian railway was suspended at the end of April.

First, the Soviet authorities beyond Irkutsk had no objections against the Czech troops crossing their territories. In a letter written in Vladivostok on May 11 Girska revealed that the Soviet of Vladivostok had twice telegraphed to the principal Soviets in Siberia pleading with them not to block their movement because they posed no danger to the Soviet regime in that harbour.⁷⁹

Second, the allegation of the Bolsheviks in Irkutsk and Omsk to the effect that transportation on the Amur railway was completely suspended, due to spring thaw, was refuted in *Ceskoslovensky dennik* on May 20 by a report of a Czech courier who arrived in Irkutsk from Vladivostok on that day. The courier reported that on his way from Vladivostok to Irkutsk he had not seen a single train of the Army Corps, although passenger and other trains were quite frequent. He said that transportation on the Amur railway was technically possible but that the provisional nature of this railway—some of the bridges were wooden constructions—made it slow.

Another piece of evidence also shows how baseless was the contention of the Bolsheviks in Irkutsk and Omsk that the Amur railway was out of order at that time. Girska put his finger on the whole problem in a letter to the National Council written from Vladivostok on May 17:

"...all trains of the Second Division are by now in Vladivostok, except those of the 6th and 7th Regiments, which are detained somewhere between Omsk and Irkutsk. Between Irkutsk and Vladivostok there is not a single train of the Army Corps. We here cannot understand why the Soviet authorities completely blocked your movement. You were given two reasons by the Bolsheviks: (1) the Amur line is not receiving; (2) Semenov operates on the Amur line and controls it.

None of these excuses has a foundation in fact:

(1) The Amur line operates and could receive our trains. I have returned from a visit to the Director of the Amur line who assured me that the line operates and that there are no difficulties whatsoever. In addition, he issued instructions to receive all our trains and requested the Railway Administration to forward these instructions to all stations along the line up to Omsk.

(2) If, formerly, operations of Semenov were a legitimate excuse, now the situation has basically changed because Semenov and his forces were driven over 200 versts away from Karymskaia. An argument that several bridges collapsed is a clumsy excuse. The fear of us, and their determination to detain our troops in Russia, seem to be the true reasons behind the freezing of movement of all our trains . . .¹¹⁸⁰

As Girsu put it, the allegation of the Soviets in Irkutsk and Omsk that the Amur railway was not operating at the end of April was an excuse for not permitting the Czechs into Siberia. However, it was quite probable that the Manchurian railway was not receiving trains for a while in the middle of May because of fighting against Semenov.

Semenov had crossed the Russian-Manchurian border on April 21, took Dauria in the morning of April 23 and Hailuor in the evening. During his further advance he captured Borzia on April 28. The Bolshevik forces retreated northward and crossed the Onon river on April 30. Semenov's troops pursued, crossed the river and then marched towards Karymskaia. Thus on May 9, Semenov was about 100 miles east of Chita and 50 miles east of the Karymskaia railway station controlling the

Aga Station on the Manchurian railway. This was the extreme limit of his expansion. He never threatened Chita, Karymskaia or the Amur railway. On May 14 the Bolsheviks mounted a counter-offensive and pushed Semenov into Manchuria.⁵¹ In view of these developments it was quite possible that the transportation on the Manchurian railway was suspended for a few days in the middle of May.

The Bolsheviks in Omsk and Irkutsk, by alleging that the Amur and the Manchurian railways could not receive the trains of the Army Corps, were obviously not telling the truth to the Czechs who pleaded for the renewal of the movement from Central Russia towards Vladivostok as this would in no way obstruct the repatriation of the German nationals from Siberia because the railway was in such an excellent operational shape.

It was unfortunate that the Soviet leaders in Irkutsk, Omsk and Moscow did not heed the pleas of the National Council to let its trains enter Siberia and evacuate Central Russia, and that instead they first unilaterally and then in agreement with the Allies decided for an alternative route *via* the northern ports, hoping that the Czechs would co-operate in the new scheme.

NORTHERN ROUTE

The request of Berlin, which resulted in Chicherin's telegram to stop the movement of trains of the First Army Corps and direct them to the northern ports, revived an old suggestion of Trotsky which he had presented to the meeting of his military commissars in Moscow on March 19, discussed earlier. While subsequently to that meeting Trotsky reconciled himself to the departure of this body from Russia *via* Vladivostok provided that free agitation among the troops was permitted to recruit for the Red Army, when Berlin demanded the transfer of its prisoners of war from Siberia he reached for the northern route as an alternate solution. His new plan evolved around a proposal that the First Army Corps be divided into two parts, Omsk serving as the dividing line. All troops east of Omsk would continue to Vladivostok while those west of Omsk would be directed towards Murmansk and Archangelsk.

earlier been proposed by the Commander of

DEPARTURE FROM RUSSIA

Northern Regions of Russia, General Ogorodnik, to the French Military Attache in Moscow. The latter, seeing the transport via Vladivostok jeopardized, forwarded the proposal to the French Military Representative on the Supreme War Council as a possible solution of the existing impasse. The Council approved it and thus the plan boomeranged back into Russia in three weeks as its own order for the Czechs to carry it out.

To trace the origin of this plan caused considerable difficulties to earlier writers dealing with events which led to the outbreak of fighting between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks, who suspected a foul play on the part of the Allies. Evidence now available throws fresh light upon the origin of this scheme and helps to solve a hitherto much misunderstood problem.

Conflicting Anglo-French Policies

Three parties were involved in the transfer of the First Army Corps from Russia to France: the Czechs, the Soviet Government and the Allies.

The position of the National Council was known for a long time. The decision to send the Army Corps to France through Vladivostok had been reached on technical and logistic grounds in February 1918. The main consideration favouring that route was the fact that Archangelsk was ice-bound until May and that although the port of Murmansk was ice-free the Murmansk railway posed a considerable risk during winter months. Also the question of providing supplies in those inhospitable northern parts of Russia was a great problem, as the National Council experienced with some of its transports which had been sent to France through northern Russia in September of 1917; they sat around Kola until March 1918. These factors ruled against the northern route. Moreover, the National Council had established early contacts with the Union of Siberian Co-operative Societies which were eager and able to sell provisions to the troops if these went through Siberia to Vladivostok. This fact, together with the excellent shape of the Trans-Siberian railway, influenced the Czech leadership in deciding for Vladivostok, or Dalny, as the ports of embarkation.

The attitude of the Soviet Government regarding the port of departure of the Czech troops was clear from the very

beginning of its contact with the National Council. On March 15 and 16 the government had agreed to the proposal submitted by Klecanda, and permitted the First Army Corps to leave for France through Vladivostok. Although at the meeting of military commissars on March 19 Trotsky had favoured the northern ports, and although the Soviet of Central Siberia strongly protested against the entry of the Czech troops into Siberia on March 22 and 28 and had also suggested the northern route, the subsequent instruction of the Central Government overruled both Trotsky and the apprehensive Soviet in Irkutsk. It will be recalled that Trotsky himself had approved on April 7 Vladivostok as the port of departure for the Czechs, and that the Soviets in Omsk and Irkutsk soon dropped their opposition under instructions from Moscow. In addition, the Soviet of Vladivostok had cabled twice to Irkutsk urging it to let the trains proceed because there was no "danger of the Czechs colluding with the Japanese in Vladivostok or with Semenov". Although later the Soviet leaders were to insist that the movement of the Czech troops had to be stopped because of the Japanese landing in Vladivostok on April 5, the evidence cited earlier makes it clear that the landing played no role in the event.

In considering the policies of the Allies towards the departure of the Czechs from Russia the position of the French and the British must be taken separately.

The attitude of the French Government was simple. In February 1918 the French Government considered Russia and the Ukraine indefensible. Because the Army Corps was an integral part of the Czechoslovak Army in France since January 22, 1918 and there was no more use for it in Russia, Paris informed the Czechs on February 18 that it had approved Masaryk's suggestion to transfer the entire First Army Corps to the French front. In view of this, the French worked with determination to get this unit out of Russia and from February 18 doggedly fought with the Bolsheviki and the British over the issue.

The British, on the other hand, had definite ideas about the use of the Czech troops in Russia. Because in March 1918 it was obvious that the Allies would have to deny the northern ports to Germany, the British thought that the Czech troops

DEPARTURE FROM RUSSIA

could be profitably used to guard these ports against a possible German-Finnish penetration.

Thus the first suggestion on the side of the Allies to use the Czech troops in northern Russia came from the British. The French Military Attache in London cabled to the Minister of War in Paris on April 1 that the British General Staff had submitted a note to the Foreign Office outlining a proposal on how these troops could be utilized in Russia. According to that note Trotsky had requested the leaders of the National Council to leave the Army Corps in Russia so that this might serve as a nucleus for the new Russian army but this request was rejected. The note further said that the British Ministry of War seriously doubted the possibility of providing the necessary ships for transfer of the Army Corps to France and, therefore, suggested that the troops be used in Russia or Siberia in the following way:

(1) the troops could be transported to Omsk region, where the National Council was organizing its Second Army Corps, to oppose German penetration into Siberia;

(2) they could be dispatched to Archangelsk in order to protect the supplies stored there and, eventually, make an attempt at establishing contact with Siberia *via* Perm. But this task would be too difficult to execute;

(3) the troops could be transferred to the region beyond Baikal Lake to co-operate with Semenov. Provided that in Chita the troops could secure arms, ammunition and supplies this alternative seemed most practicable to the Ministry.²¹

This proposal of the British Ministry of War caused a considerable anxiety to the French Ministry of War as well as to the members of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris, now headed by Benes and Stefanik as Masaryk was in Russia at that time. The National Council promptly acted through General M. Janin, who had been appointed by the French Government to act as the Supreme Commander of the Czechoslovak forces in France in December 1917. General Janin sent a letter to French Minister of War, M. Clemenceau, on April 2 sharply protesting against any changes in the plans regarding the transfer of the Czech troops from Russia. General Janin

stated that he had been requested by the National Council to insist upon their speediest removal to France. This was the unbending will of the troops in Russia, clearly evident from numerous cables of the Chief of French Military Mission in Russia, General Lavergne. The proposal of the British to station these troops around Omsk or Archangelsk must be rejected. The route through Archangelsk should be considered only if it would speed up the transfer of the Army Corps to France. The National Council would, however, agree to a temporary use of some of its troops in Eastern Siberia provided that only those already on the spot would be used and only until their embarkation for France.⁸³

The feeling of the British concerning the use of the Czech troops in Russia was strong and found its way into *Joint Note No. 20* of the Military Representatives on the Supreme War Council, adopted in Versailles on April 8, 1918. The note stated that no serious military resistance against Germany could be expected from Russia unless an immediate intervention of the Allies in that country was undertaken. The object of such an intervention would be to: (1) reduce to the narrowest possible limit the areas from which Germany could draw supplies of food, raw material and labour; (2) check German military and political penetration into Caucasus, Persia and Turkestan; (3) prevent the creation of a state of affairs which would enable Germany to transfer the remaining 47 divisions from the Eastern to the Western front; (4) measures to attain these objectives would consist of giving effective military support to every element of the Russian people willing to organize itself to resist German penetration. Similar assistance would be given to any nationality, and any element in the non-Russian regions of the Russian Empire or Persia, prepared to resist the enemy; (5) in Siberia such a support could be effectively given only by the Japanese, with eventual assistance of the Czechs and other elements who could be organized on the spot.⁸⁴

The reference to the Czech troops in *Joint Note No. 20* suggests that although the British had succeeded in including them among the elements which could organize resistance in Siberia, the French obviously scored a point in making such an assistance 'eventual', which probably reflected the objections

of the National Council expressed to Clemenceau in Janin's letter of April 2. Thus it would appear that at the time of drafting the *Joint Note No. 20* the British hoped that the Czech troops would remain in Russia, while the French counted upon their transfer to France subject to an 'eventual' service of some of them in Siberia. Although this latent conflict between the British and the French regarding the final use of the Czech troops persisted until April 27, when *Joint Note No. 25* was to reconcile the conflicting positions, there is no evidence to suggest that the discord in Versailles had any appreciable effect upon the movement of the Army Corps towards Vladivostok. The French military in Russia were de facto in charge of their transportation and went ahead with their transfer to France completely oblivious of the differences between Paris and London regarding the temporary use of some of them in Russia.

Ogorodnik's Plan

Sometime shortly after the landing of Japanese troops in Vladivostok on April 5 the Bolshevik commander of the northern front, General Ogorodnik, approached the French Military Mission in Russia with a feeler whether the French would agree to the transfer of the First Army Corps to the northern ports instead of to Vladivostok. The troops could be transported partially over railway and partially over Dvina River. The general said that the landing of the Japanese, and the possibility of the Czechs colluding with Semenov, created a special situation in Eastern Siberia which ruled against their entry into that part of the country. He suggested that they could be used to defend the Murmansk and Archangelsk regions, which the Germans would most likely attack.⁸⁵

The suggestion of General Ogorodnik appealed to the French for it would enable the troops to reach the shores of Russia much earlier, from where embarkation appeared easier. The Czechs were doing badly at that time. Their trains were stopped and in middle of April it appeared that the original plan of evacuating Penza within 10-12 days would not be fulfilled. There was little hope that the entire First Army Corps

would see Vladivostok soon, for only 12 trains out of 72 had been allowed to leave Penza so far.

This distressing situation made the French military in Russia ponder over the suggestion of Ogorodnik and, undoubtedly, prompted the Military Attache's cable to the War Ministry in Paris forwarding the proposal. The Attache, General Lavergne, cabled on April 11 that in view of recent developments it was uncertain whether the Czech troops would reach Vladivostok at all. They had agreed to disarm to facilitate the transport but, in spite of this, Trotsky had stopped all movement of their trains. The Czechs retaliated and ceased disarming, which in turn forced the Bolsheviks to renew the transportation. In view of this the general requested an early decision concerning the proposed Archangelsk route and suggested, as an alternate course, that the First Army Corps should perhaps be divided and a part dispatched through Vladivostok and another part through Archangelsk. Under the prevailing conditions it seemed advisable to leave in Russia only a very small number of these troops. Their spirit was excellent, and the men were eager to fight for their cause in France.⁸⁵

It is surprising that Lavergne should have at all considered Ogorodnik's proposal of the northern route. In communicating it to Paris, almost recommending it, the general obviously failed to consider his own experience with several groups of Czech troops which he had dispatched to the northern ports in the fall of 1917. First, he knew that no substantial stores of supplies were available in those parts of Russia. Second, he knew well that even from there he had a hard time to secure the necessary ships for their transfer to France. One group of 1,200 men had to wait there until March 1918 for the arrival of a transport ship. From his negotiations for this transport he knew that the French and the British could not spare any ships, that he had been told by Paris that only the United States or Japan could execute the transfer of the whole Army Corps and that therefore Vladivostok or Dalny were the most suitable ports.

Then there was the question of Ogorodnik's allegations concerning the possibility of a collusion of the Czechs with anti-Bolshevik forces in the Far East. Ogorodnik's allegation had a basic flaw because the sending of these troops to

the north could not have prevented them from joining these hostile forces, nor the Allies, had the latter been contemplating an intervention to depose the Bolshevik regime so much feared by Lenin and Trotsky.

In fact, the troops in the north would have been a much greater and immediate threat to the Soviet regime than in the far off Vladivostok had the Czechs entertained hostile schemes as Ogorodnik contended. First, it was likely that the occupation of the northern regions of Russia by the Czechs and the Allies would draw sharp protests from Germany, which might be coupled with joint German-Finnish military operations against the "interventionists". Such a development was not desirable because the controlling maxim of Lenin's policy was to keep the Central Powers and the Allies in check, at all cost, to prevent Russia from being turned into a battle-field of these two parties. The 40,000 Czech troops in the north would have upset the delicate balance among the Central Powers, the Bolsheviks and the Allies. Second, had the Allies really wished to intervene in Russia at that time then the Army Corps troops could have descended from the north and entered the heart of Russia through Perm to threaten Moscow, the centre of Soviet power.

Then there was the question of whether the Czech leaders would accept such an arrangement. It was most unlikely that they would throw away the plan of evacuation based upon Vladivostok and abandon the supply arrangements with the Siberian Co-operatives. It was too risky to trade the security deriving from the supply arrangement in Siberia for a dubious promise of faster transportation with no supply arrangements. For the Czechs the whole matter was simple. If the Soviet Government really wished them to leave Russia then the northern route made no sense at all because the whole Army Corps could reach Vladivostok long before the necessary arrangements called for by the northern route could be worked out. Such was the capacity of the Trans-Siberian line. In fact, the whole First Army Corps could reach Vladivostok long before the Soviet authorities could even commence the transfer of German prisoners of war from Siberia to Western and Central Russia, because it would take a considerable time to assemble them in

the railway heads from the camps scattered far and wide over a vast territory.

Finally, there was the question of agitation by the Czech Communists, of which Lavergne was fully informed, who were bent upon detaining in Russia a substantial part of the troops for their enlistment into the Red Army. The fact that the movement of the trains between Penza and Omsk would be stopped and directed to the north would afford a welcome opportunity for a fresh attempt to break up the Army Corps. An indication that this would be attempted appeared in the official newspaper of the Czech Communists, *Prukopnik*, first on April 4 and then 18. The paper said that the First Army Corps had already been rerouted to the north and that hunger, illness, isolation and exposure to elements of nature, coupled with agitation and propaganda campaign, would break down the morale of men and finish this military body. To save themselves from dying from hunger the troops would join the Red Army.

It is important to note the date of the first article, April 4, for it would appear that the Soviet authorities had been toying with the idea of the northern route already at the beginning of April and had informed the Czech Communists to that effect.⁸⁷

All these factors Lavergne overlooked in forwarding to Paris Ogorodnik's plan on April 11. In the meantime, the plan was approved by the Minister of War who replied on April 20 that the French Government had informed the British about the importance of speediest transfer of the Czech troops from Russia to France. He further told the general that he would inform him about all decisions concerning the Czechs, and that the general and Ambassador Noulens could negotiate with the Soviet Government their transfer either *via* Archangelsk or Vladivostok, depending upon availability of ships.⁸⁸

The instruction of the French Minister of War authorizing the military attache and the ambassador in Moscow to reopen with the Soviet Government the whole question of the direction of transportation of the First Army Corps added another dimension to the already strained relations between the National Council and the Soviet Government.

Problem of Tonnage

Meanwhile, the Ministry of War in Paris was making strenuous efforts to get the Czechs to France. On April 20 the Minister of War dispatched a letter to the Commissioner for National Transportation and Merchant Marine to inform him about their transfer from Russia. The letter said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would approach the American Government with a request to provide the needed tonnage in Vladivostok or Dalny. Because it was not certain whether all troops would reach these two ports, continued the letter, arrangements must be made also in Archangelsk. The commissioner was requested to approach the British Government to secure tonnage for that section of the Army Corps which would be directed to Archangelsk.⁸⁹ Obviously, the French Government expected the Americans to shoulder the main burden of tonnage from the Far East, while the British would do so from the northern ports.

The files of the Department of State in the National Archives in Washington fail to reveal any communication from Paris requesting the American Government for assistance with the transport of the Czechs from Vladivostok or Dalny. But the French Government knew well where Washington stood on this issue by initiative of the Department of State itself. The chain of action had been set in motion by a cable from the American Consul in Vladivostok, John K. Caldwell, who on April 19 informed the Department of State that Masaryk had passed through Vladivostok about three weeks earlier and that the first regiment of the Army Corps of 40-50,000 men would arrive in about nine days. Because the French Consul had no instructions regarding housing and shipping arrangement he therefore appealed to the Allied missions for assistance. Caldwell further requested the Department of State to inquire in Paris about the shipping arrangement and when approximately the ships would be available. The Allies in Vladivostok could secure barracks, but food was a problem. Should the Czechs have to remain in Vladivostok for some time the food problem could be solved by their removal to Manchuria. Caldwell further reported that fresh volunteers were joining the Army Corps in great numbers and that the entire force might reach

100,000 men. In view of this the French Government should make arrangements for their immediate transfer from Vladivostok.⁹⁰

The U.S. Secretary of State Lansing obviously anticipated that the French would require assistance from the American Government and on April 22 cabled to the ambassador in Paris that Washington would not be able to provide the tonnage for transportation of the Czechs across the Pacific. The ambassador was immediately to communicate this to the French Government and report back its response.⁹¹ The former acted promptly and called upon the Foreign Ministry on April 23. He was informed that an official request of the French Government regarding the tonnage had already been communicated to its ambassador in Washington on April 21, to be presented to the Department of State as a matter of great urgency.⁹²

The negative attitude of the American Government must have been a blow to Paris which expected the Army Corps to be in France soon. But Premier Clemenceau pursued the objective with tenacity and began exploring other avenues. On April 26 he wrote to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. Pichon, reviewing the whole matter of transfer of the Czech troops to France. He urged that these troops be sent to France as soon as possible and informed the Minister about the steps he himself had undertaken. Concerning the transfer of troops from Archangelsk, the British Government had already been asked for assistance. Regarding the troops concentrated in Vladivostok or Dalny, assistance of Japan was required and Tokyo would be approached. These troops could be sent through the United States or India, concluded Clemenceau.⁹³

Strangely enough, the French Government failed to undertake preparations in Vladivostok and Archangelsk as late as that date to receive the troops and provide adequate shelter, food and supplies. At last the matter was taken up by the Premier in a letter to Pichon on April 26. The former stated that a number of French officers must be dispatched to Vladivostok to take over and organize the arriving Czechs and ascertain whether the troops had not been contaminated by Bolshevik propaganda. The officers would make detailed arrangements with the Japanese regarding the necessary tonnage. A similar task would be assigned to the officers stationed at the

French base in Archangelsk. He further requested Pichon to inform the French Ambassador in Tokyo so that he could take appropriate steps with the Japanese Government regarding tonnage and other assistance.⁹¹ After failing in Washington, Paris hoped that now Japan would shoulder the burden of tonnage needed for the transfer of the Czechs from the Far East.

From the evidence so far cited it appears that although Paris was eager to have the Czech troops in France as soon as possible no effective steps were undertaken to receive them in Vladivostok, Dalny or the northern ports. Diplomatic correspondence shows that the Premier became worried about the dispatch of officers to the Far East approximately at the time of the arrival of the first train of the Army Corps in Vladivostok. And although the Army Corps had been on the road to Vladivostok since February 18, his first step to provide the needed tonnage was undertaken two months later, as revealed in a letter of April 20 to the Commissioner for National Transportation and Merchant Marine.

It is difficult to explain this long delay. Suggestions have been made recently that not only the British military but also some French staff officers favoured the Army Corps remaining permanently in Russia in spite of all public declarations to the contrary, and that they quietly worked in that direction.⁹² Allegations of Soviet historians maintain that the French, right from the beginning, were double-crossing the Soviet Government. It is alleged that the French exploited Lenin's generosity of permitting the Czech troops to move over the Trans-Siberian line in order to deploy them in strategic places so that these could be seized to open the way for an anti-Bolshevik intervention, for which the French were ardently working.

The exchange between Paris and the French personnel in Moscow clearly points out that these and similar allegations have no basis in fact, that all people involved on both ends worked for the transfer of the Czechs to France, and that the idea of sabotage should be discounted. The most probable explanation of this delay must be seen in bureaucratic red tape and preoccupation of the French Government with more pressing matters on the Western Front.

The obvious contradiction in the policies of Paris, favouring an Allied intervention in Siberia on the one hand and working for the departure of 40,000 troops from the area of the planned operation on the other, can be explained by the fact that the French adopted a new British plan of intervention which anticipated the participation of 690,000 Japanese troops in the venture. This large scale operation, the French believed, could do without the 40,000 Czechs. In fact, the final draft of the British plan, a long document prepared by the British Section of the Supreme War Council for the Chief of the Imperial Staff at the end of April 1918, counted with no participation of the Czechs.

Though this British plan is much misunderstood in literature dealing with the Allied plans for Russia in the spring of 1918, with most sinister implications and speculations attached to it, the document has never been published so far. Its full text is therefore included in this study as Document No. 1. Regarding the British attitude toward the Czechs in Russia, this document shows that London travelled a long way from the original proposal of its War Ministry about the 'eventual' use of some Czech troops in Siberia, which had been communicated to Paris through the French Military Attache in London on April 1.

Which Troops to the North?

Also from *Joint Note No. 25* of April 27 it appears that the British military abandoned the idea of using the Czech troops as one of the elements of the planned Allied operations in Russia and Siberia, and that by agreeing to their conditional and temporary use they adopted the French position. A considerable exchange must have taken place between the British and the French Military Representatives on the Supreme War Council prior to the final drafting of this note. The French carried the day and much improved their position from the understanding expressed in *Joint Note No. 20* of April 8.

It seems that four main considerations shaped the new agreement concerning the Czech troops: (1) military significance which the French attributed to their participation on the Western Front; (2) the fact that some of the troops had already

reached Vladivostok; (3) the proposal of the French Military Attache in Russia, acting upon Ogorodnik's suggestion, to divide the First Army Corps to expedite its transfer; (4) the fact that the Army Corps, as an Allied military body, would not be permitted by the Soviet Government to remain in Russia except as an integral part of the Red Army; this was not compatible with Allied purposes.

In view of this, it was agreed in *Joint Note No. 25* that:

- "(i) There is everything to be gained by securing their transportation at the earliest possible date.
- (ii) As the greatest possible rapidity can be assured by using Archangelsk and Murmansk as ports of their exit, all Czech troops which have not yet passed east of Omsk on the Trans-Siberian line, should be despatched to these ports."

The conditional use of the Czech troops in Russia was expressed in the second paragraph of *Joint Note No. 25* which stated *inter alia*:

"Further, while these troops are waiting to be embarked, they could be profitably employed in defending Archangelsk and Murmansk, and in guarding and protecting the Murmansk railway. Similarly, the Czech troops which have already proceeded east of Omsk could, eventually, be used as recommended in the *Joint Note No. 20*, para 5, to co-operate with the Allies in Siberia."⁹⁸

This *Joint Note No. 25* had two important consequences. First, it bridged the latent gap between the British and the French military regarding the ultimate use of the Czechs by agreeing that they could be used in Russia only provisionally, but that their ultimate destination was the French front. It will be recalled that paragraph 5 of *Joint Note No. 20* of April 8 had stated that in Siberia the support to the elements of the Russian people willing to organize themselves to resist German penetration could only be given effectively by the Japanese, with eventual assistance of the Czechs and other elements which could be organized on the spot. The British had interpreted the

The obvious contradiction in the policies of Paris, favouring an Allied intervention in Siberia on the one hand and working for the departure of 40,000 troops from the area of the planned operation on the other, can be explained by the fact that the French adopted a new British plan of intervention which anticipated the participation of 690,000 Japanese troops in the venture. This large scale operation, the French believed, could do without the 40,000 Czechs. In fact, the final draft of the British plan, a long document prepared by the British Section of the Supreme War Council for the Chief of the Imperial Staff at the end of April 1918, counted with no participation of the Czechs.

Though this British plan is much misunderstood in literature dealing with the Allied plans for Russia in the spring of 1918, with most sinister implications and speculations attached to it, the document has never been published so far. Its full text is therefore included in this study as Document No. 1. Regarding the British attitude toward the Czechs in Russia, this document shows that London travelled a long way from the original proposal of its War Ministry about the 'eventual' use of some Czech troops in Siberia, which had been communicated to Paris through the French Military Attache in London on April 1.

Which Troops to the North?

Also from *Joint Note No. 25* of April 27 it appears that the British military abandoned the idea of using the Czech troops as one of the elements of the planned Allied operations in Russia and Siberia, and that by agreeing to their conditional and temporary use they adopted the French position. A considerable exchange must have taken place between the British and the French Military Representatives on the Supreme War Council prior to the final drafting of this note. The French carried the day and much improved their position from the understanding expressed in *Joint Note No. 20* of April 8.

It seems that four main considerations shaped the new agreement concerning the Czech troops: (1) military significance which the French attributed to their participation on the Western Front; (2) the fact that some of the troops had already

reached Vladivostok; (3) the proposal of the French Military Attache in Russia, acting on Ogorodnik's suggestion, to divide the First Army Corps to expedite its transfer; (4) the fact that the Army Corps, as an Allied military body, would not be permitted by the Soviet Government to remain in Russia except as an integral part of the Red Army; this was not compatible with Allied purposes.

In view of this, it was agreed in *Joint Note No. 25* that:

- "(i) There is everything to be gained by securing their transportation at the earliest possible date.
- (ii) As the greatest possible rapidity can be assured by using Archangelsk and Murmansk as ports of their exit, all Czech troops which have not yet passed east of Omsk on the Trans-Siberian line, should be despatched to these ports."

The conditional use of the Czech troops in Russia was expressed in the second paragraph of *Joint Note No. 25* which stated *inter alia*:

"Further, while these troops are waiting to be embarked, they could be profitably employed in defending Archangelsk and Murmansk, and in guarding and protecting the Murmansk railway. Similarly, the Czech troops which have already proceeded east of Omsk could, eventually, be used as recommended in the *Joint Note No. 20*, para 5, to co-operate with the Allies in Siberia."⁹⁶

This *Joint Note No. 25* had two important consequences. First, it bridged the latent gap between the British and the French military regarding the ultimate use of the Czechs by agreeing that they could be used in Russia only provisionally, but that their ultimate destination was the French front. It will be recalled that paragraph 5 of *Joint Note No. 20* of April 8 had stated that in Siberia the support to the elements of the Russian people willing to organize themselves to resist German penetration could only be given effectively by the Japanese, with eventual assistance of the Czechs and other elements which could be organized on the spot. The British had interpreted the

phrase "with eventual assistance of the Czechs" as meaning their ultimate stay in Siberia. This position was now abandoned, and the troops ultimately were to be sent to France.

Secondly, the plan to divide the Army Corps and transport a part through the northern ports became now the policy of the Allied Military Representatives on the Supreme War Council. Though the British Military Representatives now agreed to the departure of the Czechs from Russia, their political leaders on the Supreme War Council, that is the Premier and his Foreign Minister, temporized on the issue mainly because of the lack of adequate tonnage to execute such a task. The record of the meeting of the Supreme War Council, held in Abbeville on May 2, 1918, indicates that Lord Milner, while agreeing in principle with the recommendation of the Military Representatives, stated that Britain perhaps would not be able to provide the necessary tonnage. In view of this he suggested that only the troops already in Vladivostok should be removed, while those on the way to that port should be detained near Omsk or Cheliabinsk. After a long exchange the meeting adopted the following *Resolution No. 4*:

The Supreme War Council approve Note No. 25 of the Military Representatives, and agree on the following action:

- (a) The British Government undertake to do their best to arrange the transportation of those Czech troops who are at Vladivostok, or on their way to that port.
- (b) The French Government undertake responsibility for these troops until they are embarked.
- (c) The British Government undertake to approach M. Trotsky with a view to the concentration at Murmansk and Archangelsk of *those Czech troops not belonging to the Army Corps which has left Omsk for Vladivostok.*⁵⁷

This decision of the Supreme War Council threw the problem of the Czechs in Russia into further confusion. Unbelievable as it might sound it set the Allies upon two contradictory courses of action. In approving the *Joint Note No. 25* of the Military Representatives the Supreme Council had agreed to divide the First Army Corps and direct to the northern ports all troops found on the railway line west of Omsk. The rest of

the troops, those east of Omsk, were to continue to Vladivostok. But in adopting *Resolution No. 4* the Supreme War Council agreed to transfer to Vladivostok the entire First Army Corps and remove to the northern ports only those Czech troops not belonging to the Army Corps then in transit to Vladivostok, which really meant the Second Army Corps.

To explain this confusion it must be remembered that the National Council was organizing in Omsk the Second Army Corps, which was to remain in Russia. On May 1 this body had about 1,000 men in its ranks. Thus according to paragraph (c) of *Resolution No. 4* only the troops of the Second Army Corps—"not belonging to the Army Corps which has left Omsk for Vladivostok"—were to be sent to the north while the entire First Army Corps had to proceed to Vladivostok. The British were pleading for a long time for strengthening of the northern ports by the Czech troops, and it appears that when their plea could finally be satisfied by the men of the Second Army Corps they dropped their opposition to the exit of the whole First Army Corps through Vladivostok. According to the agreement of Klecanda with Stalin and Lenin, the men of the Second Army Corps could remain in Russia anyway.²²

Leaving aside this inconsistency in the policy of the Allies an important point to observe is that the *Joint Note No. 25* approved the division of the First Army Corps, and that the decision of the Supreme War Council thus echoed and amplified the proposal which had been made by Ogorodnik to Lavergne at the beginning of April. This was to have a far reaching impact upon the fate of the Czechs in Russia.

Bolsheviks Divide the Army Corps

The Supreme War Council never realized that it had adopted two conflicting policies regarding the Czech troops in Russia. This, however, was not important because the Soviet authorities themselves had decided three days before the Supreme War Council confused the two Army Corps which troops would go to Archangelsk.

The initiative of the Bolsheviks in this matter is evident from a cable of the Soviet Government sent from Moscow to

the Soviet of Omsk through Irkutsk. This cable of instructions, addressed to Military Commissar Kosarev of Omsk Soviet, was then dispatched from Irkutsk on April 30:

"To the Staff of West Siberian Armed Forces. The Military Commissariat of Siberia orders to direct all trains with the Czechoslovaks, east of Omsk, towards Vladivostok. The trains west of Omsk must be directed towards Murmansk or Archangelsk along two lines: The Samara-Zlatoust line and the Tiumen line.

Polonnikov and Ruskin
Military Commissars."⁹⁹

It is difficult to trace the origin of this order. All we know is that it originated in Moscow and was signed by Chicherin for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bonch-Bruievich for the Ministry of War. It is certain that it was not issued in pursuance of *Resolution No. 4* of the Supreme War Council because this was to be adopted in Abbeville three days later, on May 2. It is also unlikely that the order was the consequence of *Joint Note No. 25* of April 27 adopted by the Allied Military Representatives on the Supreme War Council. It is true that the Allies in Russia, the French most probably, could have been briefed about the recommendations made in *Joint Note No. 25*. But it is difficult to imagine that within the three intervening days after its adoption in Versailles the recommendation could have been communicated to General Lavergne in Moscow, representation by him made to the Soviet Government, decision taken by the latter and then this communicated to Irkutsk for transmission to Omsk.

The explanation for the order of April 30 must be sought elsewhere. It will be recalled that already on April 11 Lavergne had suggested to Paris that the Army Corps be divided. The Minister of War was not averse to that idea and, in his reply of April 20 to Lavergne, suggested that the attache and the ambassador negotiate with the government the transit through Vladivostok or Archangelsk. Obviously, this was enough authority for these two French representatives in Russia to open negotiations with the government along the suggested

lines, and there is no reason to believe that such negotiations were not initiated after April 20.

Who negotiated this issue with the Soviet authorities and what was agreed upon is not important. Important is the fact that as a result of those negotiations the Soviet authorities now demanded, upon request of the French, the division of the Army Corps, which had been immobilized for some time, and its redirection towards the northern ports. This meant that the trains already in Western Siberia would have to return to Central Russia and that the Czechs would have to face a host of other complicating factors.

The final impasse in the transportation of the First Army Corps as a result of Ogorodnik's plan, and the prospect that all its trains west of Omsk would return to Central Russia, would afford an excellent opportunity to the Czech Communists to mount a major assault upon these embittered troops, which had been heralded in *Prukopnik* on April 4 and 18.

2

The Czechoslovak Communists

THE CRISIS within the Soviet Government over the Czech Question after Trotsky's arrival in Moscow was solved by the evolution of a double-pronged policy between March 20 and 27, 1918.

One prong of this policy, the Penza Agreement, permitted the First Army Corps to leave Russia. We have seen, however, that by the end of April the Penza Agreement was a dead letter deserted by both the Soviet Government and the Czech leadership, although for quite different reasons, and that the trains with embittered and confused troops stood immobilized in railway stations along the vast expanses of the Trans-Siberian line.

The second prong of this policy consisted of two main elements, ridden with contradictions and dangerous potentialities.

The first element was a propaganda campaign organized by the Czech Communists among the departing troops for enlistment of volunteers into the Red Army. To enable the propagandists to unfold the campaign the Soviet authorities slowed down the movement of the trains and demanded for the agitators free access to the troops and protection of their personal safety. At the beginning of March this operation called for screening each train of the Army Corps in an attempt to enlist its "proletarian core", estimated by the Czech Communists to amount to some

15,000 into the Red Army. The rest of troops, "the reactionaries and servants of capitalism and imperialism", would be permitted to continue to Vladivostok and no hostile acts would be undertaken against them. When, however, as a result of Chicherin's telegram of April 22 the movement was completely halted and the trains west of Omsk redirected towards Archangelsk and Murmansk, the objective of the campaign remained no more the recruitment of volunteers but consisted of preparations for detention in Russia of all those units of the First Army Corps which would find themselves stranded on the way to the northern ports. This shift in the objectives of the campaign was a true reflection of the cardinal change in the policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs. This early in May and for reasons to be discussed was to abandon the idea of letting them out of the country and to plan in terms of complete dissolution of their units and detention in Russia of all troops of the First Army Corps stranded in Central Russia and Siberia west of Omsk.

The second element pregnant with equally grave contradictions and possibilities consisted of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the formation of the Czechoslovak Bureau within Stalin's Ministry of National Affairs, and of the investment of that party by the Soviet Government with supreme authority over all Czechoslovak affairs in the country. At the end of March this authority, as we have seen, meant only control over prisoners of war and an assortment of small organizations existing then in Russia, but not immediately over the National Council and the Army Corps because the Soviet Government had entered into contractual relations with them in Moscow and Penza. But because the demand of Berlin, then Chicherin's telegrams of April 21 and 22 and, finally, Moscow's telegram of April 30 brought the movement of the trains to a complete halt, a situation was created in which the dissolution of those units sitting in Central Russia and on their way to the northern ports appeared a feasible solution of by then much complicated Czech Question. And it was in view of this new situation that the Bureau started to plan in terms of handling those troops who would not be willing to join the red forces and who would be detained against their will after the dissolution of their units. Moreover, early in May the

Soviet Government ceased recognizing the National Council and struck to liquidate physically its headquarters in Moscow.

It was during April and early May that the ambiguities and potentialities inherent in the second prong of the policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs became reactivated as a result of the stalemate in transportation and that they came to maturity, profoundly transforming the entire political and legal relationship between the two parties from that which had existed at the time of the conclusion of the Penza Agreement on March 26. The activities of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and of its Bureau, in combination with the circumstances connected with the change in the direction of transportation and the northern route, were mainly responsible for this transformation and the emergence of open hostility between the two parties.

PROPAGANDA ASSAULT

The Czechoslovak Communists had organized themselves into two groups. The Moscow group, as we have seen, was co-operating with Trotsky and Stalin and was in charge of the campaign amongst the troops of the Army Corps. The second group, which was functioning in Kiev since 1917, met with a sad end. It was dispatched to the Ukrainian front to assist the Bolsheviks to repel the attack of the Central Powers, mounted on February 18, 1918 to force upon the Soviet Government the peace terms. The group went to pieces in that combat and some of its members saved themselves by fleeing east as far as Penza, reaching there in the middle of March.

At that time also the Army Corps, heading for Vladivostok, was concentrating in Penza, which made this little town on the Sura River bustle with activity. The men from the Army Corps had money and wanted to buy supplies for their long journey, while peasants were only too happy and eager to sell their produce. Penza became one big market. At that time, however, no frictions hampered the relations between the men from the Army Corps and the Czech Communists who had arrived from the front. But this amity disappeared as soon as the agitators from Moscow began converging upon this city to make it a base of their campaign for volunteers for the Red

Army from among the troops on their way to Vladivostok. Penza became a scene of a fratricidal war within days.

We have seen that the first batch of agitators had been dispatched by Trotsky from Moscow to Penza and other places before March 27, and that on April 2 he had telegraphed inquiries to Samara about the result of the campaign. Because the Soviet of Samara had reported poor results new batches of agitators were then dispatched to Samara, Penza, and Ufa on the same day, those to Samara and Penza arriving on April 3.

The National Council noted the arrival of the agitators in Penza with a restrained voice on April 4:

"... A group of agitators arrived in Penza yesterday. They brought with them first number of *Průkopník*, which they distributed to incite the troops to refuse obedience and desert. We appeal to all brothers not to yield to provocations and remain calm in the face of slander and lies... We must remain calm and resist provocations by enemies. But at the same time we state that all attempts to destroy us will be repelled..."

The agitators do not appeal to our troops to lay down arms and demobilize, as was done until recently in *Pochoden* and the Russian language newspaper *Pravda*. Now they incite the troops to disobey their leadership, the National Council, led by Professor Masaryk. Now they call upon the troops to desert the Army Corps and join the ranks of the Red Army..."¹

Trotsky selected Penza as the centre from which the propaganda campaign against the troops would be mounted because it was through this important railway junction that all its trains would have to pass to connect with the great Trans-Siberian railway. Several documents enable us to follow the activities of the agitators in Penza in great detail, because the entire archives of the Czech Communist Party and its Red Army were captured by the troops of the Army Corps after the fall of this city into their hands on May 29, 1918.²

The Czech Communists in Penza went about their work with zeal. Immediately after their arrival on April 3 a visit was made to the Chairman of Penza Soviet, Commissar Kuraviev, to

introduce themselves and present their plan of action. Kuraviev was informed that the Soviet Government had authorized them to organize a Czechoslovak Red Army from among the Czechs and Slovaks living in Penza and vicinity, and was requested for assistance. The government had also authorized them to conduct agitation among the troops in transit through Penza in order to enlist as many volunteers as possible into the Red Army. Kuraviev was further told that they would recruit also among Czech and Slovak prisoners of war in Penza and adjacent areas. On April 6 they would open a Recruitment Centre in Penza to carry out agitation among prisoners of war, and a Propaganda Bureau for organizing the campaign among the troops of the Army Corps. The delegation requested the commissar to make sure that all trains of the Army Corps would be delayed sufficiently long in Penza to enable them to approach the troops.

The most important part of the interview dealt with the plan of work among the troops. The plan, presented by their leader F. Strombach, visualized the following procedure. First, the movement of all trains would be stopped in Penza. The propagandists would then approach each train "to screen and analyze" its troops. Through such a process the "proletarian element" would be selected while "officers and servants of capitalism", as Strombach put it, would be permitted to leave Russia. The Propaganda Bureau would then authorize the local Soviet to release such a rump train towards Vladivostok and admit into Penza a new one for a similar processing. Strombach urged Kuraviev to stop the dispatch of all trains from Penza at once so that the Bureau could start working immediately.³ It is important to note that the plan did not call for a wholesale, or a forcible and indiscriminate, detention of the entire First Army Corps in Russia, and that provisions were made for removal of the rejected men to Vladivostok.

For Kuraviev the request of Strombach presented a difficult choice, for it was for the first time that he was told that some other conditions, in addition to those entailed in the Penza Agreement, were attached by the government to the departure of the Czechs. First, he was under orders of Stalin to release the disarmed trains eastward as soon as the terms of the Penza Agreement were fulfilled and issue a certificate of safe conduct

to the effect that such a train could be no more searched and tampered with by the Soviets along the railway line. Now Strombach demanded, also in the name of the government, that all disarmed trains must be detained in Penza and none of them released until authorized by his men. Lastly, Kuraviev was pressed by the impatient leadership of the Army Corps to speed up the disarmament so that the trains could clear out of Penza as soon as possible.

Kuraviev extricated himself from these conflicting pressures by steering a middle course. He let out of Penza only one or two trains a day instead of the fifteen which had been promised to the leadership of the Army Corps. When Maxa protested he was told that the restriction had no political background and was due to some "unexpected technical difficulties" which would be removed soon. In view of this, Maxa accepted the explanation. This arrangement also satisfied Strombach because his men could prepare their campaign in the meantime.

While Kuraviev met at least partially the request of Strombach regarding the detention of the disarmed trains, it seems that he could not accommodate his plan about the "processing and analyzing" of the troops. The commissar could slow their movement and even stop it altogether, but it was impossible for him to appoint the Czech Communists into the Disarmament Commission dealing directly with the troops, or secure in some other way a free access of their agitators to the men, as demanded by Strombach. In fact, Strombach and Kuraviev argued over this problem on April 3. While the commissar agreed in principle with the purpose of the plan he found the mandate of Strombach not strong enough to disregard the terms of the Penza Agreement concerning the immediate release of disarmed trains. Clearly, Strombach's demands were not compatible with the Penza Agreement, which he himself had negotiated and the terms of which he knew only too well. Moreover, he was unwilling to get himself involved in an argument with the leadership of the Army Corps after an amicable settlement of the impasse over disarmament, and probably resented that he had not been informed directly by Stalin about such an important change in the government's policies regarding the Czechs but only through Strombach.

This reserved attitude of Kuraviev was reflected in the first

situation report of Strombach to his colleagues in Moscow, partly written immediately after his encounter with Kuraviev on April 3 and partly on April 4 (Document No. 2). Strombach first reported that he had demanded from Kuraviev that no Army Corps train be permitted to leave Penza until screened by his men, and then requested his comrades in Moscow to make sure that the government issued appropriate orders to the Soviet in Penza to the effect that the release of all trains of the Army Corps from that city must be stopped at once and that the Soviet must accommodate all his demands connected with the campaign. The comrades in Moscow must make such an arrangement with the government which would vest Strombach with far more authority for his dealing with Kuraviev and the commissars of the local Soviet.

As a result of this intervention in Moscow Strombach received more power while Kuraviev was instructed to demand from the leadership of the Army Corps, in the name of the government, for Strombach and his men free access to the troops to enable them to organize their propaganda mission.

It was not an easy task for Kuraviev to communicate this request of the government to the leaders of the Army Corps because he knew very well how seriously it infringed upon the terms of the Penza Agreement. The commissar adroitly used the opportunity which offered itself on April 7 to discharge this task. On that day a delegation of the Army Corps visited him regarding Trotsky's instructions of April 2, which had halted the movement of its trains. While jubilantly showing a copy of another cable of Trotsky, of April 7, to the effect that the movement could be renewed Kuraviev seized this moment and requested the obviously pleased quests to allow the propagandists to conduct a campaign among the troops. Yet another factor played into Kuraviev's hand. On April 6 one of the agitators, using a particularly abusive language, had been seized and arrested by the angered men. Now Kuraviev demanded his immediate release and a guarantee that such cases would not occur again, and said that the Soviet Government had amply demonstrated its goodwill towards the Czechs by allowing them to depart from Russia. To display to the visitors his own friendly attitude Kuraviev said that he had rejected the repeated requests of Strombach which demanded an immediate and complete

halt of the movement of all trains, also of those which had already been disarmed. But now the National Council must play its part, said Kuraviev, because the government insists upon its right to conduct agitation among the departing troops; in fact, he was under orders to demand in the name of the government freedom of action for the agitators and guarantee of their personal safety.⁴

The delegates were surprised. True, Trotsky had spoken with Klecanda on March 27 about the right of the government to conduct agitation among the troops, but the commissar had not made their departure from Russia conditional upon the fulfilment of this claim. From Kuraviev's presentation of the claim it was obvious that now it was so. After the interview the delegates concluded that his demand had substantially changed the Penza Agreement and that the position of the Army Corps was entirely different from that envisaged under its original terms.⁵

Kuraviev's demand was subject of a crucial and long debate of the National Council on April 7. Because it was an official request of the government the meeting decided to yield to avoid complications and a tussle with the authorities. Another consideration favouring this course was an expectation that by accommodating the government this would be obliged to renew the movement of the disarmed and screened trains. Under the existing conditions a swift evacuation of Penza became the overriding concern, to which every concession must be made.

To facilitate the work of the agitators the meeting further resolved that the command of the army would issue a special order whereby all those wishing to leave the Army Corps, either to join the Red Guards or for any other reason, may freely do so. Such men would be honourably discharged and appropriate documents would be issued to them to that effect.

Kuraviev's official request regarding free agitation among the troops prompted the National Council to change its original policy towards those men who would wish to leave the Army Corps. The original policy had been formulated on April 4, one day after the arrival of the agitators in Penza, when the National Council had decided that:

"... an attempt will be made to explain to such men the undesirability of their departure from the Army Corps; special reference will be made to the damage such a step might cause to national interest and morale of the troops. No difficulties will be, however, made to those wishing to depart. But no documents will be issued to them, and after departure they will be considered deserters..."⁶

After accommodating the government the meeting of April 7 adopted certain measures to safeguard the unity of the Army Corps and tighten up discipline of the troops. A suggestion was approved that anyone wishing to visit the town must secure permission of his commander, and that all unauthorized persons milling around the trains would be arrested, interrogated and then sent away.⁷

To give effect to these decisions the command of the Army Corps issued *Order No. 34* on April 8, informing the troops that the agitators had been granted free access to the trains and warning against use of force against them; the propaganda assault must be repelled orally. Kuraviev had been informed about all these measures on April 7. He was told that the agitators would be facilitated free access to the troops and that their personal safety would be guaranteed, provided that the campaign was conducted in a peaceful manner.

The order guaranteeing immunity of the agitators introduced a major change in their work. Until then this was limited to distribution of *Prukopnik* and of various declarations and appeals which called upon the men to desert and join the Red Army. That kind of work had to be carried out at night, and secretly, through assistance of contacts operating among the troops. As is evident from Strombach's letter of April 3 he had established such contacts the next day upon his arrival from Moscow. Such an activity involved considerable personal risks, because it was not safe to approach the trains and engage the impatient and angry men in political arguments.

The *Order No. 34* entirely changed the position of Strombach's men. Now they could openly approach the trains, bring loads of printed material and distribute it freely because of protection by the National Council and the Penza Soviet. In

spite of all the privileges and advantages the results of the campaign proved disappointing because the men proved tough and devoted soldiers. When the frustrated agitators, as the last resort, began slandering officers and the National Council and abuse Masaryk and the Allies, the troops answered in a language not exactly complimentary to the Soviet Government and the campaign degenerated into an ugly exchange.

While the National Council permitted the agitators free access to the troops the rank and file, and officers, looked with great suspicion upon this privilege, which further widened the already existing disagreement over the policies to be followed in face of the continuous violations of the Penza Agreement by the Soviet Government. The troops and officers considered the accommodative attitude of their political and military leaders not only a humiliating but a suicidal course, and gave vent to their feelings.

First to speak were the men from the Soviets of the Army Corps. The Soviet of the First Division, representing all Regimental and Company Soviets of that division, dealt with the assault of the agitators at a specially convened meeting on April 8. The agenda featured a debate on measures to protect the unity of the troops and how to treat those who would assist the agitators in their campaign. The meeting unanimously decided that anyone attacking the National Council, whether an agitator or a man from the Army Corps, would thus commit an act of treason and therefore would be arrested and handed over to the Divisional Court for punishment. The decision was not, however, put into effect. It was overruled by the National Council and the military command because it contradicted their declared policies: the demand of the Soviet Government to conduct agitation had been granted and, therefore, no arrests would be permitted.⁸

The opposition of officers of the First Division against the accommodating policies of the National Council and the military command was even more radical than the stand taken by the Soviet of the Division. To understand why the troops and officers of the First Division were so impatient with and opposed to the policies of concessions it must be realized that the division was deployed on several railway approaches west of Penza, and that during past three weeks none of its trains

was permitted to advance an inch. The officers not only challenged the wisdom of concessions to the government, but prepared a detailed plan to ensure the safety of the Army Corps and renew its movement eastward. The officers of four regiments of the First Division, all of Czech and Slovak nationalities except the Commander of the Division and his Chief of Staff, met on April 13 in Kirsanov railway station. The meeting demanded a very drastic revision of the National Council's attitude towards the violations of the Penza Agreement by the Soviet authorities and called for even a forcible renewal of the movement. Some writers cite the resolution adopted (Document No. 3) as evidence proving that a conspiracy against the Soviet Government was planned there and then, a long time before the swords were actually crossed in May, seeing the origin of the armed confrontation between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks in that very event.⁹

The resolution was indeed a bold document. Had its recommendations been followed by the National Council there is little doubt that the troops would have reached Vladivostok in the middle of May. In fact, when the Czechs became cornered in May it was precisely the policy advocated by the resolution which became resorted to in order to break the impasse and force the way to Vladivostok.

The records are silent about the reaction of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Corps, General Shokhorov, upon receiving such a radical plan of action dispatched to him by a coded cable on April 14 at 8 P.M. from Verkunovskaia Station. The matter became subject of a confidential meeting of the National Council and the military command; all we know is that the general rejected the policies advocated by the resolution, called for the execution of orders of the National Council and the command, and warned against unauthorized acts.

The National Council and the military command were convinced of the soundness of their policy and scrupulously carried out all measures facilitating the access of the Communist agitators to the troops. And yet, soon they found themselves seriously deadlocked with the Penza Soviet over the meaning of "free agitation". The immediate cause of a new crisis was the arrest of one of the agitators by men from the Artillery Brigade. Though Kuraviev, as Political Commissar of Penza Soviet,

lodged a formal protest the matter was now handled by the new Military Commander of Penza Guberniia, Commissar Nikonov, who on April 11 invited to the Headquarters of the Red Army General Shokhorov, R. Medek and J. Kudela. Nikonov first requested information concerning the number of Czech troops, their deployment and the aim of their movement to the east. He then launched a tirade of complaints, alleging that the officers were obstructing the conduct of propaganda among the troops and harassed the agitators working on behalf of the Red Army. Their effort, said he, had the full support of the Soviet Government and the Supreme Command of the Red Army was anxious for immediate results.

This astounded the delegates, who told Nikonov that he was wrongly informed about the true state of affairs. They explained the arrangement ensuring personal safety of the agitators and the guarantees which made it possible for any one wishing to leave the Army Corps freely do so. Nikonov was told that the agitators had free access to the troops, but had to appear before an appropriate Army Soviet to be issued a written authorization and be furnished with an armed escort to ensure their personal safety. The matter of dealing with the agitators was entirely in the hands of the Army Soviets and therefore the officers, the military command and the National Council had nothing to do with it. In fact, all questions concerning education and political propaganda were in the hands of the Army Soviets for a long time. Moreover, Nikonov was told that the agitators did not limit themselves to peaceful and decent agitation but waged a campaign of slander and lies. Blackmail, bribery and fantastic promises and lies were used by them, which naturally irritated the troops making them at times resort to rather drastic protective measures. Nikonov was assured that the National Council and the command were doing all in their power to pacify the irritated troops, who were getting tired of the whole affairs, and to maintain peace. If not for this, and had the troops been left to themselves, the events would have taken a disastrous turn. Nikonov was further told that the National Council could not say how long it would be able to control the men, warned that in supporting that kind of agitation he and the government must be prepared for the consequences which the irritated troops might precipitate, and requested to restrain

the excesses of the agitators. Nikonov "frankly admitted that he was wrongly informed",¹⁰ and promised to look into the matter.

To pacify the Bolsheviks of Penza Soviet, who were excited over the arrest of some agitators by the Artillery Brigade, and to show that the Czech leadership stood by the arrangement guaranteeing their security, General Shokhorov dispatched new instructions to all troops on April 10 repeating the substance of his *Order No. 34*.¹¹ Because the main objective of the Army Corps was a fast departure from Penza, said the general, all demands of the Soviet Government must be met to keep the trains on the move. This was reiterated again in his transportation order on April 13.¹²

While the National Council made every effort to ensure continuous movement of its trains, the Soviet authorities proved equally adamant in insisting upon more freedom for the agitators. The two parties had a frank exchange of views on this score before April 15.

Kuraviev invited the Czech leaders for a "beseda", or friendly chat, on that day.¹³ The delegation came to the meeting bent upon telling Kuraviev in a friendly manner that the National Council had evidence showing the hand of the Czech Communists behind the orders of the Soviet authorities halting deliberately the movement of trains which had already once been disarmed. The following statement published in *Prukopnik* on April 4 was cited to him as an example:

"To make matters clear: the trains transported on the Murmansk railway and the Trans-Siberian railway to France were stopped during last few days. Our agitators were dispatched to inform the troops about the true state of affairs. We could never forgive ourselves if the 60,000 promising young men were sacrificed in the capitalist-imperialist war in France . . ."

The delegates protested against this apparent influence of the Czech Communists upon the Soviet authorities in all matters relating to the departure of their troops from Russia. Kuraviev said that it was not so, and that on the contrary it was the Soviet Government who had ordered the trains to be stopped

THE CZECHOSLOVAK COMMUNISTS

and dispatched the agitators. He said that he must insist again, in the name of the government, upon its right to conduct agitation among the troops, protest against the attempts of the National Council and the military command to obstruct it, and against the obstacles placed in "the work of the Czechoslovak Section of the Russian Communist Party". Kuraviev told the delegates that:

"... the purpose of agitation was to make the revolutionary Czechoslovak soldiers refuse to go to France to fight for capitalists there and induce them to enter the ranks of the Red Army ..."

The delegates retorted that there was enough evidence to show that neither the National Council nor the command opposed agitation conducted by an exchange of views and without abuse. They further told him that the Czech Communists misused the support of the government and Penza Soviet and instead of conducting a peaceful and decent campaign indulged in lies and personal insults which irritated the troops. This was the root cause of occasional difficulties and violent confrontations.

The much improved position of the Czech Communists was not only reflected in Kuraviev's and Nikonov's persistent pleading on their behalf, but in a new and important privilege granted to them by Kuraviev himself. On April 16 the Russian members of the Mixed Disarmament Commission functioning in Penza were replaced by two Czech Communists. This move was not a small matter. Leaving aside its legal implications, the new arrangement meant that the Czech Communists not only enjoyed free access to the troops but that now they also directly controlled the release of the disarmed trains and could detain in Penza any of them and as long as necessary to put it repeatedly through the "screening and analyzing" process. Using this new authority the trains which had already been disarmed once were stopped again and new inspections ordered. Their hand began to reach far out of Penza soon, because the disarmed trains were often stopped in Samara and beyond upon the request of the Czech Communists from Penza who demanded new disarmament inspections. This tactics was employed in co-operation with their

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comrades in Samara in order to provide them with an opportunity for a fresh barrage of propaganda. The conflict was spreading.

The leaders of the National Council in Penza observed with concern this development, as Medek reported on April 16:

"Recently, the Czech Communists won an important measure of influence over Penza Soviet . . . On April 16 the Czech Communists replaced the Russian nationals on the Disarmament Commission. We are now entirely at their mercy. They control all movement of our trains and without their explicit permission not a single train is allowed to leave Penza . . . They lie to the Soviet commissars that our men have hidden weapons and hence the stoppage and new disarmament inspections in Samara."¹⁴

Strombach and his comrades obviously made a great progress since early days of April, when their work was limited to the distribution of newspapers and leaflets under the cover of night; now they represented the Soviet Government in the Disarmament Commission. By the middle of April it became evident that although numerically insignificant, compared to some 40,000 men of the Army Corps, they were steadily gaining politically in the struggle for the control of this body.

No purpose would be served by going further into records to give more details about the agitation campaign in Penza and its deterioration in the middle of April into an unwholesome exchange which left in its trail bitterness, frustration and suspicion among all parties concerned. The degree of mutual antagonism generated was not worth the pitiful results in terms of volunteers recruited into the Czechoslovak Red Army, as the following account and figures indicate.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK RED ARMY

During his first interview with Kuraviev on April 3 Strombach informed the commissar that his group had been authorized by the government to organize the Czechoslovak Red Army from Czech and Slovak prisoners of war. Because a number of such men still lingered in prisoners of war camps or

worked in factories and on farms, several groups of agitators were then dispatched to campaign among them. However, as the largest contribution to the ranks of the Czechoslovak Red Army was expected to come from the First Army Corps, the main effort was directed against its trains stationed in Penza, Samara, Ufa, and Omsk where the Czech Communists had established their propaganda offices at the beginning of April. The Soviet Government was steadily reinforcing these groups with money, newsprint and other supplies to facilitate their efforts.

Headquarters in Penza

The Soviet civilian as well as military authorities in Penza showed great interest in the activities of the Czech Communists and extended all assistance. Former quarters of the Tsarist army in Penza, Skobolevsky Barracks, were now placed at their disposal for the ranks while the command of the Czechoslovak Red Army and its staff established themselves in Ermitazh Hotel. A seven-member Executive Committee was set up, as the supreme body, to direct the entire political and military action. This committee co-operated closely with the Soviet political and military authorities in Penza, and in view of the important role which its ranks played in the city one of its officials became a full-fledged member of Penza City Soviet.

The military body organized in Penza was called the First Czechoslovak Revolutionary Regiment of the Red Army. No evidence is available to show the number of its ranks in the middle of April 1918. On April 24 one member of the National Council, F. Eisenberger, estimated that it had about 200 men.¹⁵ Another estimate made on May 1 put the figure at about 300 men.¹⁶ On April 21 the regiment took part in a procession of the Bolshevik garrison in Penza and then in a public meeting organized by the local Soviet.

On April 13 the command issued its first Order of the Day to regulate the internal life of the regiment. Although the regiment was basically an infantry unit, some special detachments were also established: machine gun, artillery, communication, automobile and intelligence. The training programme consisted of political and military education. The men had to

study Marxism, significance of the Bolshevik Revolution, its impact upon world events and the role which the proletarian Red Army would play in the world revolution. Printed instructional material was issued for the purpose. The military programme consisted of training in all traditional chores.

The procedure of admitting the volunteers was simple enough. Anyone wishing to serve simply joined without having to apply or sign any contract, provided he was of a "proletarian origin" as defined by the decree of the Soviet Government establishing the Red Army of Workers and Peasants on January 26, 1918. The nationality of the volunteers did not come into the picture at all at this stage. But political and legal complications, resulting from several protests from Berlin which the Soviet Government had received in the middle of April against the recruitment of German nationals into the Red Army, brought about a radical change. From the end of April all volunteers had to adopt Russian citizenship. This applied also to the Czechs. Another innovation introduced by the command of the Czechoslovak Red Army on April 22 made each volunteer to sign a loyalty pledge and a contract promising to serve at least 6 months; the monthly pay was 50 rubles. This was a handsome sum which attracted many prisoners of war as well as some recruits from the Army Corps who served for 12 rubles a month. To keep the troops ideologically in line the command published newspaper *Ceskoslovenska Ruda Armada*; the first issue appeared on May 12 in Russian language.¹⁷

The First Revolutionary Regiment was composed of three infantry battalions, each having about 150 men on the eve of the armed conflict with the Army Corps on May 26. The captured documents of the Czech Communists in Penza enabled Krizek to follow the growth of the Second Battalion and compute that on May 5 the battalion had 46 men, on 10th of May 85 and on 20th of May 118. On the eve of the conflict, May 26, the number reached 177.¹⁸ As the command had assigned all recruits from the Army Corps to this battalion Krizek's computation is important because it enables us to ascertain the effectiveness of the propaganda campaign. Thus according to Krizek 6 men arrived on May 6, another 6 on May 10, 3 on May 13, 11 on May 16, 16 on May 18, and 7 on May 22. From May 6 until 22 the battalion recruited 49 men,

and it may be assumed this was the total number of men recruited through the propaganda campaign from the Army Corps between these two dates.

The total number of men in all three battalions can be ascertained from a report of Deputy Commander of the Regiment, J. Pospisil, who on May 24 records 364 men and two days later 450. The increase was due to the return of 86 Czech Communists who under Strombach's command had left Penza for Saratov on May 17. Out of the 450 men, 352 were seasoned soldiers; the rest was untrained. The equipment of the three infantry battalions consisted of 430 rifles, while 2,410 rifles and 70,000 cartridges were stored.

The auxiliary troops of the regiment were the following. The artillery detachment consisted of 48 men, 7 field pieces and 2,000 shells. There was no experienced instructor to show the men how to handle the equipment. The machine gun detachment had 28 men and 12 machine guns, "Maxim" and "Colt", and another 28 machine guns stored. The communication detachment consisted of 27 men to handle telephone and 18 cavalry couriers. Other auxiliary services—the Staff Office, medical service, bakery, tailor shop, gunnery and others—employed 148 men.

Thus the total number of troops of the First Revolutionary Regiment in Penza on May 26 was 720; only 462 had some combat experience or training.

The Penza Soviet and its military authorities greatly appreciated the efforts of the Czech Communists because the Revolutionary Regiment contributed significantly to the overall military posture of the Bolsheviks not only in that city but in the region as well. The entire armed forces of Penza Soviet on the eve of the conflict with the Army Corps amounted to some 1,520 men, to which the Czech troops contributed 720 men, almost 50 per cent. Kuraviev and Nikonov had good reasons for persistently demanding for the agitators free access to the troops of the Army Corps. The whole Volga region was restless and in many places the opposition challenged the Soviet rule. The local Soviets frantically called for assistance and the strongholds of Soviet power, like Penza and other larger cities, had to help with troops, including the Czech Communists. For instance, at the beginning of May the Soviet administration in

Kuznietsk, about 90 miles east of Penza, had been deposed and Kuraviev had to dispatch an armed expedition, including some 100 Czech Communists, to suppress the uprising.

One of the most important instances of the Czech troops assisting in suppression of an anti-Bolshevik uprising took place in Saratov, a stronghold of Soviet power 100 miles south of Penza. On May 16 the insurgents had seized several field pieces and with their assistance captured the building of the Soviet and of the command of the Red Army, the post office and the railway station. In response to the appeals of the Saratov Bolsheviks Penza sent a regiment of Latvians, some heavy artillery, 223 Czech infantry, and the entire Czech artillery and the machine gun detachments on May 17 under Strombach's command. Kuraviev personally led this armed expedition. Only 86 men were to return to Penza from this Czech contingent, as after that engagement the rest fought against Ataman Dutov around Uralsk.

Even these two instances indicate the usefulness which the Czech troops had for the Bolsheviks in Penza and Volga region. Further discussion will show that also the Central Government in Moscow lacked troops, and that early in 1918 it had to depend a great deal upon recruits from among prisoners of war of the Central Powers to maintain its hold over the vast expanses of Russia and Siberia against the increasing armed pressure of domestic opposition.

At this moment, however, an important point to establish is the extent to which the increase of the troops in the First Revolutionary Regiment, in addition to the estimates of Krizek, was due to effectiveness of the propaganda campaign. At the end of April and beginning of May the Regimental Orders of the Day issued by the Army Corps had regularly listed the names of those who had deserted on previous day. However, because the campaign had fizzled out and only a few deserted in the second half of May, the Regimental Orders stopped reporting these events. Obviously, the first campaign for enlistment into the Red Army, which had been organized in February 1918, had drained the ranks of those wishing to join the red forces.

From available evidence it would appear that from the beginning of February until middle of April the propaganda

gains were rather small, totalling at the most 20-30 men. It was only after the suspension of the movement of the trains in the middle of April, and after the concerted assault of the Czech Communists and the left radicals from within the National Council, that the gains considerably increased. According to Krizek, the total number of volunteers who joined the Red Army between May 6 and 22 was 49. As for the number who had joined from May 1 until 6 and those who were to join from May 22 until the beginning of the armed conflict on May 28, it would be a fair guess to estimate that during those two periods some 50 men had departed from the Army Corps.

Thus the effectiveness of the campaign to induce the men to desert, from the arrival of the propagandists in Penza on April 3 until the exchange of the first shots in that city on May 28, would present the following picture: 30 men until end of April; 49 from May 6 until May 22; and 50 during the two intervening periods. This adds up to 129 men.

From where came the rest of the 720 men enlisted in the Czechoslovak Red Army in Penza. A great number of them had been recruited from prisoners of war camps. *Swoboda* reported on May 13 that the efforts among prisoners of war were highly successful, and that at the end of April a well functioning organization had been operating in the camp in Penza. The paper further reported that soon after its establishment the organization had sent over 100 new recruits to join the ranks of the Czechoslovak Red Army. It is probable that during May the organization extended its activities beyond Penza and thus contributed another good number of volunteers. The National Council itself had organized from among the prisoners of war in Penza and vicinity a Reserve Battalion of 1,000 men, reported by *Ceskoslovensky dennik* on May 19.

Another element which contributed to the ranks of the Czechoslovak Red Army consisted of former Communist troops of the Kiev days. Their organization had been shattered to pieces during the Ukrainian campaign in February 1918, and those troops who survived retreated to Penza. One battalion reached Kharkhov in the beginning of April and still had some 200 men in its ranks.

Considering the men which the prisoners of war organization in Penza contributed to the ranks of the Czechoslovak Red

Army, the troops of the February days who emerged in Penza during March-April, and the men which Moscow and Petrograd might have sent, our estimate that 129 men deserted the Army Corps in Penza appears reasonable.

Samara

Trotsky had dispatched two groups of agitators to Samara on March 27 and April 2. Josef Hasek, leader of the first group, arrived in Samara on March 28 with some 30 men and at once saw the Chairman of the Soviet to explain a plan of his work. The Soviet allocated Hotel San Remo as the Headquarters of the Military Department in charge of organizing the Czechoslovak Red Army. The trains of the Army Corps, stranded then at Samara railway station, were approached in a similar manner as in Penza and flooded with newspapers and various declarations and appeals printed on leaflets. The propagandists observed with amazement the eagerness of the troops in collecting every single leaflet and generously supplied them in bulk hopefully believing that they all would be distributed and eagerly read. But the men had a different use for paper and stocked themselves well for a long journey over Russia and Siberia. This aspect of agitation remained a joke for a long time.

There was, however, a marked difference between the propaganda campaigns organized in Penza and Samara. In Samara the relationship between the agitators and the troops was more correct and in many instances friendly. The first public meeting organized by the agitators in Samara on April 12, attended by 120 people, was visited also by a group from the trains led by Lieutenant A. Fajgl, and views were exchanged without incident.

The man responsible for setting the work of the Samara agitators on this friendly course was Hasek. He sincerely believed that through explanations and friendly talks it would be possible to persuade a good number of troops to stay in Russia. On April 15 and then 17 he cabled to the government in Moscow a request for financial and other assistance, and on April 16 dispatched a cable directly to Lenin. Hasek informed Lenin that he had established contact with several

men from the Army Corps who would work within it for the Bolsheviks. The prospect of winning large number of recruits for the Red Army was good, said the telegram, because an internal crisis due to several postponements of the planned congress of the Army Corps was rocking the troops. An internal opposition against the policies of the National Council was steadily gaining a momentum. At the end of his cable Hasek requested an immediate financial and other assistance so that he could exploit these favourable developments.²⁹

In the meantime the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communists in Samara dispatched a delegation to take part in the First All Russian Congress of Prisoners of War, held in Moscow on April 13 and 14, and the participants reported upon that event at a public meeting held in Samara at the end of April. When a mention was made to the effect that the congress had decided to send revolutionaries into Austria-Hungary and Germany to carry out underground work, and when Hasek suggested to the members of the National Council present that their troops should participate in the project, the men from the Army Corps welcomed the suggestion. Following this, the leaders of both groups met several times at the beginning of May and agreed to merge the two organizations of prisoners of war functioning in Samara, one controlled by Hasek and one by the National Council.³⁰

The developments in Samara could have taken such a favourable turn only because Hasek himself was undergoing a change of heart about the whole business of which he was in charge. He detested, and was worried about the consequences of the instructions which the Moscow headquarters of the Czechoslovak Communist Party had dispatched to its operators in the field at the beginning of May. These clearly indicated that the Soviet Government now adopted a militant attitude towards the Army Corps which he believed would lead to serious complications. The task of the Communists was no longer to campaign for volunteers, but undertake preparations for the retention of the entire Army Corps in Russia and its dissolution.

This policy shift had a profound effect upon Hasek. He ceased writing for *Prukopnik* and commented favourably upon Masaryk and the National Council in his public pronounce-

ments. To facilitate closer co-operation with the National Council and the Army Corps he parted with his radical friends and set up a group which favoured *rapprochement*.²¹ Members of this group stopped calling themselves Communists, and in middle of May Hasek and his comrades openly criticized the Moscow leadership and ceased recognizing its authority. Hasek particularly opposed the idea of a forcible retention of the entire Army Corps in Russia. He was certain that all those wishing to join the Red Army had already done so and, in view of this, pleaded for its free and speedy departure. He believed that the troops would serve the cause of revolution even in France by disseminating democratic ideas, which by itself provided a good justification for their transfer. On the eve of the conflict of the Army Corps with the Bolsheviks Hasek even thought of returning to the old fold, to rejoin the Army Corps, but the suddenness and violence with which the fighting exploded made him uncertain about how and whether he would be received.²²

Meanwhile, however, the Communists in Samara went ahead with the task of organizing the Red Army. On May 13 the unit had 80 men in its ranks, and at the end of May between 150 and 170. Adding the political leaders and agitators the total number of the Czech Communists in Samara was about 200.²³ Available records do not indicate how many troops deserted the trains stranded in Samara. Probably only a handful, if any, because the troops had already been screened once in Penza. A large prisoners of war camp in Samara contributed most likely some to the ranks of the Czech Red Army. The National Council itself had recruited from this camp 375 volunteers at that time.²⁴

Omsk

While Penza and Samara were the two principal battle-grounds where the Czech Communists had fought for recruits from among the troops of the First Army Corps, in Omsk the battle was waged for control of prisoners of war.

It will be recalled that Masaryk had planned to organize in Omsk the Second Army Corps which would remain in Russia to assist any Russian government willing to resume military

operations against the Central Powers, either directly on the front or in munition and other factories, mines and in agriculture to support the war effort of the government. Klecanda had negotiated that issue with Sta'in, Mandelstam and Aralov on March 15 and on the next day Lenin approved the project whereby the National Council was put in charge of the whole scheme. We have, however, seen that within a week or so the government reversed itself, and that Karakhan and Trotsky informed Klecanda to that effect on March 24 and 27.

In the meantime, however, the Military Commission of the National Council prepared a plan for organizing the Second Army Corps in Omsk with no reference to the participation of the Soviet Government or the Czech Communists. The recruitment office in Omsk was to function as a subsidiary of the National Council in Penza, with Markovic as director. When the first train had departed from Penza on March 27, Markovic and his assistants went along authorized to open the office in Omsk.

Upon reaching Omsk Markovic met a wall of hostility. Although some members of the Omsk Soviet sympathized with Markovic's plan, the large and influential group of the Czech Communists operating there since February, and the Internationalists, made the Omsk Soviet reject several applications requesting permission to open the office. Markovic reported to the National Council on April 13 that the Omsk Soviet had not permitted his activities because of the opposition of the Internationalists, who controlled a large bloc of votes in the Soviet, although the Russian members of the Soviet were in favour.²⁵

The Soviet of Omsk could have hardly taken a favourable action on the numerous applications of Markovic. It was in the hands of the Internationalists and each national group—the Czechs, Germans, Austrians, Hungarians and Latvians—had one representative sitting on its Executive Committee.

The situation obtaining in Omsk had been reported upon by Girs and Houška on April 7. Their letter said that the situation in Siberia, and particularly in Omsk, was not favourable for recruitment of volunteers for the Second Army Corps. The Soviet of Omsk was not willing to support the plans of the National Council and prohibited recruitment because of strong

propaganda of German and Hungarian Internationalists.²⁶ A letter of Glos reported on April 10 that the commissars of the Omsk Soviet had explained to him that they could not permit the activities of the National Council because of opposition of the Internationalists. The strong influence of the Internationalists upon the decisions of the Soviet, commented Glos, was due to the fact that they controlled the administration of all local prisoners of war camps and that the Soviet maintained itself in power mainly due to the fact that over 1,000 Internationalists served in the ranks of its armed forces.²⁷

The struggle of the Czech Communists with Markovic over the prisoners of war in Omsk was merciless. The former enjoyed the support of the Omsk Soviet and the Internationalists, while the latter was supported by the men in the prisoners of war camps. Markovic capitalized upon the support he drew from the camps and opened the recruitment office in Omsk in spite of the protest of the Czech Communists and without the permission of the Soviet authorities.²⁸ The results were good. By May 19, two weeks after the opening, the office had recruited over 1,000 men into the ranks of the Second Army Corps.²⁹

The results of recruitment by the Czech Communists among the prisoners of war in Omsk proved by no means insignificant. A batch of their organizers had been dispatched to this centre of Western Siberia from Kiev and Petrograd at the end of February 1918, because the Omsk Guberniia had the largest number of detention camps. However, the first Communist organization in Omsk, composed of local Czechs and Slovaks, emerged even earlier, at the beginning of February. The group conducted propaganda campaigns in camps to enlist volunteers into the Battalion of Internationalists then under organization.

The initial step of the Soviet authorities in the matter of the Internationalists in Omsk had been undertaken early in February 1918. The inmates in the camps were screened and the gates opened to those willing to join the battalion. The volunteers were then armed and formed into a unit which became known as the First Omsk Battalion of Internationalists.

Because the influx of volunteers continued, the Omsk Soviet started organizing the Second Omsk Battalion. While the Czech Communists had contributed only a handful of recruits to the first battalion, the second unit received 180 of their

volunteers.³⁰ The Second Omsk Battalion was housed in the Military College and consisted of three companies—one of Hungarians, one of Germans and one of Czechoslovaks—organized along national lines.

The company of the Czechs was commanded, with other Internationalists, against Semenov at the end of March and suffered 4 dead, 23 wounded and 27 lost.³¹ After Semenov was driven to Manchuria the group failed to return to Omsk. On the way back from Manchuria, at the end of May, it was to clash with the troops of the Army Corps in Siberia fighting then the Bolsheviks, during which encounter most of its men perished, some surrendered, as one group of Slovaks, and rest dispersed. The company ceased to exist.

During April and early part of May further canvassing was carried out among the prisoners of war by the Czech Communists in Omsk. This campaign contributed another, and rather a large group, to the armed forces of the Omsk Soviet. The exact number of these men is difficult to ascertain. Some lead is provided by *Prukopnik*, which reported on April 18 that the Czech Communist Party in Omsk commanded 1,300 newly recruited men. Perhaps they all served in the ranks of yet another Battalion of Internationalists.

It seems that the group consisted entirely of recruits from prisoners of war camps, as neither the available records of the National Council nor of the Communist Party list a single case of desertion from the trains of the Army Corps in Omsk. This conclusion is probable. The Omsk Guberniia had a large number of prisoners of war, potential recruits, while the trains of the Army Corps, well screened in Penza and Samara, only passed through on their way to Vladivostok.

It appears that the group was also dispatched against Semenov in the first half of May, never returned to Omsk, and met a fate similar to that which had been commanded to Manchuria at the end of March.

Small units of the Czechoslovak Red Army were organized in Moscow, Tambov, Tsaritsyn, Kazan, Buzuluk, Tomsk, Petropavlovsk, Pctrograd, Vladivostok and other places. These consisted exclusively of prisoners of war canvassed locally and played no role in the origin of the conflict between the Army Corps and the Bolsheviks. The number of their troops was

insignificant in May, although later some of them became drawn into the fighting.

The total result of the propaganda and military efforts of the Czech Communists in all Russia and Siberia, from the inception of their toil at the beginning of April until the flare-up of the conflict at the end of May, boils down to the following account. In Penza the Czechoslovak Red Army had approximately 720 men in its ranks; out of these some 129-150 had deserted the Army Corps. In Samara it had 200 men. In Omsk the Czech Communists had contributed to the armed forces of the Omsk Soviet perhaps 2,000 men. However, there were no deserters in Samara and Omsk. The total number of volunteers who joined in other cities in Russia and Siberia amounted to a few hundred.

Thus the Czech Communists recruited into their Red Army, after two months of efforts, some 3 000 men who were concentrated in Penza, Samara and Omsk. This number included about 129-150 deserters from the Army Corps who had been recruited in Penza and its vicinity, which was about half a per cent of its 40,000 troops.²²

While the 2,800 men recruited from among the prisoners of war was undoubtedly a considerable figure, the fact that only 150 had been recruited from the Army Corps indicated the dismal failure of the campaign in progress in Penza, Samara and other places since the end of March. It must be remembered that the campaign was based upon an expectation that it would be possible to bring to the Bolshevik side some 15,000 troops forming the "proletarian element" of the Army Corps, and that the 150 men actually recruited amounted to a mere one per cent of the target figure.

This was a miscalculation of colossal dimensions, and its share in the outbreak of the conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks cannot be overestimated. One is not certain, however, whether the Czech Communists are to be blamed for filling the ears of Trotsky and Stalin with vastly exaggerated and unrealistic promises, or whether to blame the commissars for their gullibility in believing them.

POLITICAL EFFORTS

In developing further the second prong of its policies towards the Czechs, in addition to sponsoring the propaganda campaign, the Soviet Government undertook steps to establish the Czechoslovak Communist Party and to vest it with supreme authority over all Czechoslovak affairs in Russia. The declaration to that effect, as we have seen, was published on April 2 in *Prukopnik*. While we have assumed that the original authority did not include the immediate control over the National Council and the First Army Corps, unless the Bolsheviks were double-crossing the Czechs only a week after the conclusion of the Penza Agreement, which was unlikely, the declaration became interpreted soon to mean also the control over those two bodies, regardless of the immediate efficacy of such a move.

The first evidence of such an interpretation appeared on the pages of *Prukopnik* on April 4, which printed a decree of the Soviet Government to the effect that all Czechs and Slovaks in Russia must have their personal papers and other documents verified by the Executive Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The Czech Communists in Penza insisted that should the men in the Army Corps refuse to submit their papers for verification, their stay in Russia would be illegal. In view of this, they could be turned over to Vienna as citizens of Austria-Hungary and exchanged for Russian prisoners of war held by her; such an exchange would take place soon. *Ceskoslovenska Ruda Armada*, published in Penza, warned that all former Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who failed to accept Russian citizenship would be exchanged. "Do not rely upon the documents issued by the National Council; these are invalid papers."

Reports of this nature had a shattering impact upon the confidence of the National Council in the honesty of the Soviet Government. They rekindled the lingering doubts which its members shared with Klecanda about the true purposes of the Bolsheviks after his interview with Trotsky on March 27, only a week earlier, because they suspected that there always remained the possibility of the government invoking the terms of the peace treaty regarding the exchange of prisoners of war as a reason for demanding the dissolution of the Army Corps.

This fear became one of the main obsessions driving Maxa and the National Council to concessions and, finally, to the abandonment of the terms of the Penza Agreement altogether, in order to keep the trains on the move and evacuate Central Russia as soon as possible. This fear was well expressed in a letter of Markovic of April 23 from Omsk to the effect the Czechs must move out of Central Russia as fast as possible because of the great pressure which Berlin was putting upon the Soviet Government regarding the exchange of prisoners of war, which would include all subjects of Vienna, and thus might claim the troops of the Army Corps.²³

Such reports published in *Prukopnik* and the *Ceskoslovenska Ruda Armada* and insinuating that the Army Corps would be thrown into the exchange of prisoners of war had even more devastating impact upon the morale of the troops, already irritated to the extreme by the unwholesome propaganda campaign of the Czech Communists, who did not hide the fact that the ultimate aim of their efforts was the prevention of the Army Corps from leaving Russia.

These anxieties of the National Council and the troops became further heightened on April 14 by a telegram of Moscow to Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk demanding that all trains must be completely and unconditionally disarmed down to 15-20 rifles per train, and that there was no need to negotiate this disarmament with the National Council. This telegram, in combination with the reports concerning the transfer of authority over all Czechoslovak affairs in Russia into hands of the Communist Party, injected doubts and great uncertainty into the whole question of the legal and political status of the National Council *vis-a-vis* the Soviet Government. It reopened the lingering suspicion whether the Bolsheviks were not playing a foul game since Klecanda's interviews with Karakhan and Trotsky at the end of March. From all developments since that time it appeared possible to many members of the National Council and the troops that the Bolsheviks merely wished to placate the Czechs by formally permitting their troops to leave the country, bowing to the then superior strength of the Army Corps, while at the same time gradually whittling it down and wearing them off by continuous demands for disarmament and other concessions and to the point

at which the balance of forces would shift in their favour and when the Czech Question could be solved on their own terms.

In the meantime, the work on the establishment of the Czechoslovak Bureau within Stalin's Ministry of National Affairs progressed well and *Prukopnik* on April 11 announced that it would start functioning soon. The paper also announced that plans were being made for convocation of a Founding Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Russia, to open in Moscow on May 25, 1918.³⁴

Because by the beginning of May the establishment of the Czechoslovak Bureau with Stalin's Ministry was completed, with A. Hais as Chairman and F. Bents as Secretary, the government moved to liquidate even physically the National Council to accomplish the transfer of power. The reason is that by that time the Soviet authorities abandoned the idea of letting the Czechs out of Russia and decided on their forcible retention in the country. On May 9 the Central Requisition Commission of the government issued an order confiscating the office rooms of the National Council in Moscow, assigning them to the new leadership: the Executive Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the Editorial Office of *Svoboda*, and the Staff of the Czechoslovak Red Army. The eviction order was delivered by A. Hais, who was accompanied by three armed Bolsheviks. The Chief of the Council's office, Lenfeld, refused to submit and lodged a protest with the Soviet Government which was rejected. On May 11 Hais and five armed Bolsheviks appeared again, seized the rooms and bodily threw out the officials on the street.³⁵ On this occasion Hais confiscated all documents of the National Council, later much quoted by the Soviet authorities, allegedly showing complicity of the Czechs and the Allies in plotting an attack upon the government to overthrow it.³⁶ The Moscow headquarters of the National Council ceased functioning.

The decision of the Soviet Government to detain in Russia all troops of the First Army Corps stranded west of Omsk was reflected in a report on the plans of the Bureau of the Czechoslovak Affairs, published in *Prukopnik* on May 17, 1918, which assigned new tasks to the Czechoslovak Communists. The report dealt with a number of problems which would arise from the detention of all troops, particularly those who would

be detained against their will, and announced that in view of the latter aspect of the problem the Bureau had already been reorganized into several suitable departments. According to the plan, one department would be exclusively in charge of dealing with the men refusing to join the Red Army; these would be employed in factories, mines and agriculture to assist the government in economic rehabilitation of the country and hence would be as useful as their comrades serving in military ranks. Another department of the Bureau would deal with educational matters. A plan proposed by this department envisaged the establishment of a number of Czech schools in Russia, anticipating that the men detained in the country would marry and settle and that therefore an opportunity must be given to their children to receive education in the language of their fathers. Obviously, the government was planning in terms of a permanent settlement and, as *Prukopnik* stated, had already promised financial and other assistance to the Bureau to that effect. One of the departments of the Bureau handled the registration of all Czechs and Slovaks in Russia and another was in charge of issuing appropriate identification documents to them. Then there was the military department which was organizing the Red Army for some time, with its agencies functioning in Penza, Samara, Omsk and other places.

When *Prukopnik*, with the above outline of the internal structure of the Bureau and of the tasks which its individual departments would handle, was distributed among the troops in the trains stranded in Penza, Samara and elsewhere, the men and their leaders became convinced that they faced not the end but the beginning of serious complications with the Soviet Government and the Czechoslovak Communists.

* * *

Although the gains of the propaganda campaign were insignificant in terms of expectations, the Czechoslovak Communists were gaining steadily during April and first half of May of 1918 in political and legal terms in their struggle for control of the Army Corps and the National Council. Their role and their share of responsibility in the origin of the conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Legion is crucial, in fact, central, as will be seen soon.

3

The Soviets and Their Armed Forces

LENIN'S favourite dictum maintained that the fundamental question of every revolution was the question of power. And yet, the Bolsheviks had very little of military power in November 1917 when they seized the Winter Palace, and during the spring months of 1918 when their regime had to entrench itself and defend its rule. In both cases the Bolsheviks succeeded by default of their opponents rather than through their own strength.

The chief reason for this lack of military power was the fact that as soon as the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace under the banner of "peace and bread", their infant regime became victim of their own peace propaganda. The Russian muzhik was sick of war, sick of wearing uniform and sick of bearing rifle. He wanted to go home. His mind was set upon running away from the front by the propaganda of Bolshevik agitators, and other factors, for a long time. As soon as the German-Bolshevik armistice on December 5, 1917 brought the front to a standstill, he hurried home¹ to grab the land promised by the defunct Kerensky government and now by the regime of Lenin. Nothing and nobody could make him take a rifle in his hand again. This unwillingness of the Russian muzhik to join the Bolshevik Red Guard, or to give armed support to the

opposition groups, was the dominant feature of the Russian scene until the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict at the end of May of 1918.

And yet, the Soviet regime survived the greatest crisis of its existence which threatened to extinguish it in the spring months of 1918. The reason for this survival was the adroitness of the Bolshevik leadership: when it became obvious that Russian nationals could not be induced to come forward in defence of the Soviet regime its leaders began organizing the left radicals from among the prisoners of war of the Central Powers into regular military formations. These then, the *Battalions of Internationalists* as they were called, became the chief element of the armed strength of the Bolsheviks and a willing and effective tool in assisting them to entrench themselves in power. The progress was phenomenal. Our discussion will show that the Bolshevik forces at the end of April were composed of 30 to 40 per cent of Internationalists in European Russia, up to 60 per cent in Western Siberia, and up to 90 per cent around Lake Baikal and further east. If not for these foreign nationals in the armed forces of the Bolsheviks it is very doubtful whether their regime could have survived the challenge of the opposition which began to gather momentum during April and May 1918.

The Internationalists also played a most significant role in the origin of the conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks. First, in some places like Omsk, they exercised a controlling influence upon the local Soviets which made the latter not only hostile towards the Czech troops but in many cases prevented them from carrying out the orders of Moscow concerning the implementation of the terms of the Penza Agreement.

Secondly, the fact that the Internationalists had joined the Red Army in such large numbers and were then deployed against the Czechs during May resulted in a significant change in the balance of forces between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks. This improved military position encouraged the authorities in Moscow to decide for a military solution of the Czech Question shortly after the final impasse in the transportation had been reached, and to lay a plan of forcible retention of the entire Army Corps in Russia.

In view of the fact that the change in the balance of forces between the Czechs and Bolsheviks, due primarily to the influx of a great number of Internationalists into the ranks of the Red Army, played such a significant role in the origin of the armed struggle between these two parties, an enquiry will be made into the overall military position of the Soviet regime from January 1918 up to the outbreak of the struggle in the second half of May, and then into the organizational efforts of the Bolsheviks among the prisoners of war during that period. Further, the discussion of the military position of the Soviet Government during that crucial time will enable us better to understand Trotsky's motives in his drive, in co-operation with the Czech Communists, against the Army Corps in order to secure a nucleus for his ambition of raising a new army for the government. Moreover, the discussion will show that the basic assumptions of the Kirsanov Resolution were correct, and that had the Czech command acted upon its recommendations there was no military power in entire Russia and Siberia in middle of April which could have stopped this unilateral and, perhaps even forcible, renewal of transportation had the Bolsheviks refused to co-operate in the venture.

The final aspect which makes the study of Internationalists important is the fact that the whole question of prisoners of the Central Powers in Russia was very intimately connected with the Allied plans for a military intervention in that country in order to reopen the Eastern Front.

The Allies in Russia showed a considerable alarm at this high percentage of enemy nationals in the Bolshevik armed forces and, because the Soviet regime resting upon the bayonets of mercenaries had forfeited the right to speak for Russia, voices began to be raised advocating an Allied expedition into that country. First, to arrest the growing influence of prisoners upon the Russian political and military scene, and then to reopen the Eastern Front. This was in March and April 1918. But the Allied Governments took no action because some of their representatives in Russia, sympathetic to the Bolsheviks, deliberately or otherwise underplayed in their reports from Russia the number and significance of prisoners in the armed forces of

the Bolsheviks and the danger these posed for the Allied interests in that country.

The Allied Governments became deadlocked over the interpretation of evidence relating to the Internationalists in April and, as a clear picture could not be obtained at that time, the problem of sending an Allied expedition into Russia became subject of a prolonged controversy which immobilized the hands of the Allies until July 1918.

RED ARMY

After a considerable mobilization effort during the preparations for their armed uprising, carried out since July 1917, the Bolsheviks commanded some 26,000 Red Guards all over Russia on the eve of their seizure of power in October. In Moscow they had 4,000 troops, Astrakhan 3,500, Odessa 3,200, Kiev 3,000, and from 10,000 to 12,000 troops in other 53 main cities, industrial centres and in Petrograd Guberniia. The Winter Palace, which was the seat of the Provisional Government in Petrograd, was stormed by 3,663 Red Guards.² Thus the Bolshevik seizure of power was not a revolution in its true sociological and political meaning and as a historical inevitability but a classical *coup d'état* carried out by a handful of troops with no popular support against the central organs of the government and the entire nation. Russia had only one true revolution, and that was the March Revolution of 1917, which deposed the Romanovs and set the country upon a road of constitutional development. Thus it is historically inaccurate to refer to the Bolshevik seizure of power as the Great October Revolution, although this *coup* opened the road to profound and truly revolutionary social and political changes in the country.

This military position of the Soviet Government was seriously affected by three following events. First, the government published a *Decree of Peace* on November 7, 1917 and then shortly thereafter Trotsky, as Commissar of Foreign Affairs, called upon all belligerents to stop fighting and start negotiations for peace. Second, the Central Powers responded to this call and concluded with the Bolsheviks armistice on December 5. Third, on December 22 a peace conference between the two parties opened at Brest-Litovsk to terminate the war. This

general climate of peace had a profound effect upon the morale of the Red Guards with the result that a great number of them left their units by the end of 1917.

The first attempt of the Bolsheviks to buttress their regime with organized military power was made on January 22, 1918 by publishing a decree concerning the establishment of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants. The decree visualized no compulsory military service, and the Red Army was to consist of volunteers. The *Starka* of this new army issued the following instructions on January 26: (1) local Soviets would be responsible for organizing their own troops; (2) the basic unit would be a battalion of 150 men; (3) local Soviets would take care of all expenses, housing and other related problems; (4) troops would be under the command of local Soviets; (5) integration would take place only at the command level by creating the District Commanding Staffs.³

Except for several thousands of the Red Guards from the October 1917 days who had not deserted, and two regiments of Latvians, the Soviet regime had no organized military power in the whole of the Russian Republic upon which to draw for support at that time. The decree of January 22 remained a dead letter because only a small number of volunteers joined the ranks of the Red Army. This lack of response of Russian nationals to the call of the government prevailed until the attack of the Central Powers, which was launched on February 18 to force upon the Bolsheviks the peace terms.

Though the Soviet Government could organize no large-scale military effort, nevertheless some 20,000 troops resisted the attack in the Ukraine. These forces consisted of some 1,800 infantry and 300 cavalry which the government dispatched to the Ukraine at the end of January to suppress the Ukrainian Rada,⁴ and of an unknown but small number of workers hastily mobilized under the impact of the attack in Petrograd and elsewhere and sent to defend the Ukraine. The vast majority of the 20,000 troops now forming the front was not composed of the Bolsheviks, but of ardent patriots who had not deserted the front-line positions in the fall of 1917. By a freak of fate these troops now threw their support behind the Bolsheviks in an attempt to resist the attack of the Central Powers. Not because they sympathized with the new rulers of Russia, but because of

their patriotism. Mother Russia was in danger. This alliance was, however, shortlived.

Mention has been made of the rout which these forces suffered in the Ukraine and that the Soviet Government decided to accept the peace terms the very day the attack was launched. Because one of the conditions of peace called for the dissolution of all military forces of the old regime—the Bolsheviks were permitted to keep a limited number of their own troops to maintain internal order, more a police force than an army—a government decree of March 2 dissolved even those remnants of the old army which under the spell of patriotism had defended the Ukraine.

This decree substantially reduced the armed forces of the Bolsheviks available at that time. From the work of an eminent Soviet military historian of this period, N. Kakurin, it appears that the demobilization carried out under this decree reduced the total number of the Bolshevik forces in the Ukraine to some 1,800 infantry and 300 cavalry. These troops, as will be recalled, had been dispatched by the Soviet Government from Russia proper at the end of January to suppress the Ukrainian separatist government and formed a part of the 20,000 troops resisting the attack of the Central Powers. But soon even this hard core was reduced to 300 infantry and 200 cavalry and the Headquarters of the Southern Front, Antonov Ovseienko was its Commander-in-Chief, was liquidated.⁵

Many reasons were responsible for this sorry state of the Bolshevik armed forces. One of the most important factors which adversely affected the morale of their troops and contributed in no small way to their disintegration were fresh volunteers. The Red Army Commander Sytin telegraphed to the Supreme Military Collegium on April 8 that the volunteers, who had been dispatched by the Collegium to join his forces in Briansk, proved an undisciplined lot which had a disastrous effect upon the morale of his men. "Please send ten times less new troops but of better quality", pleaded Sytin, "this is the view of all military commanders." Another telegram to the Collegium states that the new volunteers completely demoralized the troops they joined: "all these troops are in the state of dissolution and for all practical purposes ceased to represent a fighting force."⁶

Commenting upon the causes which had contributed to the disintegration of the armed forces of the Bolsheviks in March-April, 1918 Kakurin passed the following verdict:

"The hardship of struggle with the enemy surely affected the souls of the troops. But the documents show that it was the influx of new volunteers from the rear, and their demoralizing effects upon the troops, which were chiefly responsible for the disintegration of the armed forces of the Soviet Government."

There is no evidence to indicate how many troops the Bolsheviks had on the northern flank of the front and in Petrograd. Probably not too many. The bulk of the available forces had been dispatched to the Ukraine on February 18 to take a stand against the main drive of the enemy from Gomel towards Odessa. Judging from the impact which the demobilization decree of March 2 had upon the Bolshevik troops in the Ukraine, it is probable that whatever troops the Bolsheviks had elsewhere on the territory of the Russian Republic experienced a similar decline.

Thus it would seem that the period immediately following the conclusion of the peace treaty on March 3, 1918, saw the Soviet Government again with a small number of troops under its command. How many is not easy to say. The government never published any figures concerning the armed forces it had during that critical period. Here a guess will be hazarded, certainly surprising at the first look but perhaps justified by further discussion, that all which the government commanded on the territory of the Russian Republic at that time, including the fateful Latvian Guard, amounted to perhaps 10,000 troops.

The efforts of Trotsky to raise a new army for the Bolsheviks, and his negotiations with the Allies in Moscow to secure their assistance, have been mentioned. It will also be recalled that speaking to the Moscow City Soviet on March 31 Trotsky had outlined a plan of organizing a modern army, about half a million men, as a minimum required to safeguard the external and internal security of the government. It must be remembered that a formidable force of 47 divisions of the Central Powers

still loomed over Russia,⁸ and that on the home front the Bolsheviks were under attacks from all sides.

The first step in the direction of providing the government with an organized military force was taken on January 22 and 26, 1918 by the decrees laying the foundation for the establishment of the Red Army. Next came the decree of March 2 concerning the dissolution of the old army: this provided that the new troops organized under the January decrees must merge with the Red Guards, the original military forces of the Bolsheviks from 1917. On April 22 came a new decree, which established the District and County Military Commissions. Another decree was issued on April 23 to regulate the prisoners of war of the Central Powers serving in the ranks of the Red Army.

Thus at the end of March there was a tremendous disparity between our estimate of 10,000 troops on hand and those 500,000 required by the government. And it is not surprising that precisely at that time the idea of recruiting volunteers from among the troops of the Army Corps entered the calculations of Trotsky and his colleagues, upon the encouragement of the Czech Communists.

It is a matter of record that the Soviet Government failed in the enlistment of Russian nationals into the Red Army at that time. Evidence taken by Kakurin from files of the Supreme Military Collegium, presided over by Trotsky, shows that as late as April 9 the results were negligible. For example, in Nizhnii Novgorod only 174 men enlisted after considerable efforts had been made by the local Bolshevik authorities. In Voronezh not a single officer volunteered to organize the campaign. A cable from Tsaritsyn reported that the campaign had to be stopped because of lack of interest after the enlistment of 375 men. In Irkutsk 350 men joined. Nobody volunteered in Ivanovoznetsk. In western regions of European Russia, where the population lived in proximity of the front, the results appeared generally better. For example, in Smolensk 2,000 men enlisted. How many of these actually joined is another matter not known.

During April the campaign was intensified and the Bolsheviks could show a significant increase of their armed forces. On April 30 the results in the Moscow and the Petrograd Military Districts were the following according to Kakurin:

In the city of Moscow 22,201 men registered, but only 9,338 of them really joined the ranks. The rest somehow disappeared; most of them took the pay, new uniforms and other provisions and vanished. The whole Military District of Moscow, excluding the city, could rely upon 7,339 men actually in the ranks while those enlisted numbered 11,984. The Petrograd Military District had 9 Battalions of First Army amounting to some 13,000 men. Hence, in the two most important areas and the two centres of its power the Soviet Government could rely only upon 30,000 men in the ranks of its armed forces, although another 30,000 volunteers had been registered.⁹ These latter men failed to show up, however, and for all practical purposes must be discounted as a military asset.

In considering the military value of the 30,000 troops of the Red Army one has to take into account several factors. It seems that the Petrograd and the Moscow Military Districts had to defend the entire area of the Russian Republic under the control of the Bolsheviks. The Petrograd command had to defend the entire western, north-western and the polar regions of Russia, and the Moscow command was in charge of maintaining the Soviet regime in eastern, central and southern parts of the Russian Republic. Although the local Soviets could recruit locally, in many instances troops had to be rushed in from their capitals upon frantic calls of local Soviets to suppress the anti-Bolshevik uprisings breaking out in many areas. For example, the command of the Petrograd Military District dispatched to the unfolding fronts of civil war some 8,400 troops between February and April 1918: to the Ukrainian Front 1,700, the Kaledin Front 2,300, the Western Front 1,400, and the Finnish Front 3,000.¹⁰

The rest of the picture of the military position of the Soviet regime on the territory of the Russian Republic at the end of April can only be guessed, and not too accurately. The records of the Supreme Military Collegium, as reported by Kakurin, give no figures. Another strange fact is that no attempt has ever been made by the Soviet Government to give a complete account of its forces at that time, and that even later, when the pertinent records were available, all Soviet historians abstained from doing so.¹¹ Were any substantial organized forces in rural areas on hand these, undoubtedly, would have been reported

and registered in the records of the Supreme Military Collegium. The absence of such reports would suggest that the forces in rural areas were rather small and not organized, mere loose bands, which perhaps amounted to 20,000 men. Only larger cities in rural areas had some Red Guards for protection of the local Soviets; the villages practically none.

Considering Kakurin's figures relating to the Moscow and the Petrograd Military Districts which had responsibility for the over-all defence of the Russian Republic, and considering further our guess relating to the rural areas, it would appear that on the territory of the entire Russian Republic the government commanded some 50,000 troops at the end of April 1918.¹² It should be emphasized that this estimate concerns only the Russian Republic, and that in Siberia and the Far East the Soviet Government commanded even less troops, as will be seen later.

It was a formidable task for these small forces to put down a number of skirmishes and several serious armed uprisings against the Soviet regime, and to protect the state administrative machinery and the local Soviets on such a vast territory stretching from the northern regions down to the Caucasus. It is in this connection that the military significance of the 40,000 troops of the Army Corps, concentrated on a relatively small area and along a major transportation line, becomes fully apparent, underscoring the correctness of the basic assumptions of the Kirsanov Resolution. In the power vacuum existing in Russia in April 1918—due to the fact that the peace treaty, the government's degree dissolving the old army and the lack of enthusiasm of Russian nationals for volunteering for the Red Army had left the regime practically defenceless—the Army Corps was a military power of first order.

It would be idle to speculate about the fate of the Soviet regime had the Bolsheviks failed to organize armed forces adequate enough to put down the awakening opposition, and how this would have influenced the fortunes of the departing Czechs. The fact is that during April and May the Bolsheviks harvested the results of their work among prisoners of war, carried on since December 1917, and leaned upon the armed support of Hungarian, Austrian and German comrades to survive the worst

crisis of their young regime. This improvement of their military position was primarily due to the influx of Internationalists into the Red ranks, who because of their sheer numbers became an important factor influencing the Russian domestic scene and thus greatly affected the attitude of the government towards the departing Army Corps and *vice versa*.

THE INTERNATIONALISTS

Little is known about the prisoners of war of the Central Powers who served in the armed forces of the Bolsheviks during the spring months of 1918. The reason is that Soviet literature has never admitted, except for hints published in the early period, that the prisoners of war served in large numbers in the Red forces. Also in studies of western scholars this topic has been insufficiently investigated, and even Kennan's work on the decision of the Allies to intervene in Russia, to whom the assessment of the prisoners of war serving in the Red forces was central to his thesis, seriously underestimated their number and significance as will be seen. Only recently several memorial studies published in the Soviet Union and elsewhere deal with the Internationalists, but gloss over the period between March and May 1918, which is crucial for the understanding of the role played by these foreign nationals in the outbreak of fighting between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks.¹³

For the Czechs in Russia the Internationalists were the source of continuous irritation and, therefore, they observed them closely. The troops resented the daily spectacle of the local Soviets throwing the Internationalists into the struggle with democratic and national forces to uproot the fast spreading resistance to their rule. Tragic scenes were witnessed in which these foreign nationals, with indifference and ruthless brutality, liquidated thousands of Russian patriots and democrats and destroyed their political and military organizations to prevent their forces from consolidating themselves. The men in the Army Corps ceased to consider the unfolding civil war a domestic quarrel of the Russian people because Lenin and his party had internationalized it a long time before. The high percentage of Internationalists in the ranks of the Red Army, and the arrogant manner in which they went about their business, made the

Czech troops believe that the Russian people had been betrayed by the Bolsheviks and that the moment was not too far away when the Internationalists would overrun the Soviet regime and deliver the whole of Russia into the hands of Berlin. Though seemingly far-fetched this notion was not entirely without an element of truth. The Soviet authorities themselves soon became alive to this danger and pleaded with the Czechs for assistance when in possession of information about an impending *coup* against the government under planning by the Internationalists, as we shall see soon.

Political Organization

The possibility of utilizing the prisoners of war of Berlin and Vienna interned in Russia had been recognized by the Soviet Government soon after the seizure of power. One of the first measures of the government to use the prisoners of war—the Hungarian, German and Austrian Socialists who already during the fall of 1917 had shown sympathy for the Bolsheviks—was a declaration of the Revolutionary Staff of Moscow Military Okrug made on December 15, 1917. The declaration stated that the Revolutionary Staff, in agreement with the Soviet Government, had assumed the task of promoting "the revolutionary initiative evident among prisoners of war." All Soviet authorities and managers of industrial enterprises employing these friends of the Bolsheviks were then ordered to facilitate the setting up of their political and trade union organizations.¹⁴

The revolutionary initiative referred to in that declaration was reflecting itself in a number of meetings organized by prisoners of war. One such meeting was held in the Club of Nobility in Moscow on December 16, 1917, where several speakers addressed the representatives of prisoners of war from Moscow and camps nearby. Commissar Chvolsky welcomed the delegates in the name of Moscow Soviet and called upon them to work for the overthrow of governments in Europe. Commissar Gregolsk addressed the meeting in German. He urged those prisoners of war who would be returning to Germany soon to take a lesson from the Bolsheviks and organize a similar revolution in their native land. The meeting was addressed by a Hungarian, German, Czech, Pole and a Romanian, all

speaking in the same vein. The last point of an adopted resolution emphasized that the Soviet Government would fall if it remained isolated and not supported by revolutionary upheavals in other countries, and then appealed to the troops still at the front and prisoners of war in Russia to unite in order to overthrow the old world order.¹⁵

To promote revolutionary upheavals in Europe the Soviet Government established a special Prisoners of War Commission within the Commissariat of Military Fronts in December 1917, which functioned in Smolny Institute in Petrograd.¹⁶ Until then the Commissariat of Military Fronts had been organizing extensive political propaganda and fraternization among the troops of the Central Powers in the front lines. The activities of this newly established Prisoners of War Commission became chiefly organizational and technical. It organized the prisoners sympathizing with the Bolsheviks and distributed propaganda material prepared by the Bureau of Revolutionary Propaganda functioning in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Because the emphasis upon utilization of prisoners of war for the promotion of revolution in Europe needed a special agency with wide powers, the government set up a Bureau of Prisoners of War on January 18, 1918, and placed it in charge of both the organizational and ideological work. Its subsidiaries were then set up in Moscow, Omsk and other places with large concentration of prisoners of war.

This development paralleled the initiative displayed by the prisoners of war themselves. In December 1917 representatives of several nationalities met in Petrograd and established the Central Committee of Internationalist Prisoners of War. This body secured official recognition of the government as the only representative of all prisoners of war in Russia, and applied immediately for permission to organize military formations, Brigades or Battalions of Internationalists, from members of its national groups. The permission was granted, and in early January 1918 the first military units of the Internationalists, organized along national lines, appeared in Petrograd and other cities. From that time on the gates of prisoners of war camps became thrown open to agitators sent by this committee, and foreign nationals were screened for enlistment as volunteers for a revolutionary war against their own governments.

It is important to note that at that particular time the dominant theme of the propaganda work in the camps emphasized the need for carrying the flames of revolution into the heart of Europe, that the Internationalists were described as an advance guard which would set the old continent ablaze, and that their military units functioned as temporary formations organized for the purpose of training in revolutionary work. The unit functioning in Petrograd was called the Liebknecht Brigade, after the famous German leader of the Spartakus Bund Karl Liebknecht. A special school for training in revolutionary work was also organized in Petrograd. In spring of 1918 it trained and dispatched 20,300 operators into the following countries: Germany 3,500, Hungary 5,000, Bohemia 2,000, Serbia and Slovenia 1,800, Romania 1,500, Poland 2,000, and 4,000 to other countries. Special departments were set up to fabricate passports and personal papers and forge public documents for the agents. The Bureau of Revolutionary Propaganda in Moscow published close to 3 million copies of newspapers, though irregularly, in the following languages: German 800,000, Hungarian 900,000, Czech 200,000, Serbian 200,000, Russian 300,000, and Polish 500,000.¹⁷

A radical change in the whole conception, organization and purpose of the Internationalists took place at the time of the February 18 attack of the Central Powers upon the Soviet regime to force upon it the peace terms. In that hour of danger the government called upon the Internationalists to defend the Soviet rule and dispatched them to the front. This radical change in their purpose necessitated a change in the name of the central organization of the prisoners of war, which became known as the Soviet of Social Democratic Workers of All Nations.

The new aims of the Internationalists reflected a fundamental shift in the policies of the Soviet Government. This took place at the historic session of the Central Executive Committee of the Bolshevik Party held on February 18, 1918, where Lenin rejected proposals of "revolutionary war" upon the Central Powers in order to achieve internal consolidation of his regime. The hope in an immediate revolutionary cataclysm in Europe, as a saviour of that regime, was given up and emphasis placed upon achieving internal consolidation. Because the promotion

of revolutionary expansion beyond the confines of Russia was now overshadowed by efforts of building internal strength, the activities of the Internationalists became adjusted accordingly. The dominant themes now advanced by the propagandists of the Bureau of Prisoners of War called upon the Internationalists not to return home but remain in Russia to assist the Bolsheviks to safeguard their regime against external danger and internal opposition.

A special congress of prisoners of war was speedily convened in Petrograd on February 20, two days after the renewed offensive of the Central Powers, in order to raise troops which could be dispatched to the front. The Congress adopted the following resolution:

*"The new offensive of Austro-German imperialism is a deadly blow not only to revolutionary Russia but also to common efforts of the proletariat of all nations. The fate of the Russian Republic is linked with the fate of International Revolution. It is the duty of every prisoner of war to defend the Russian Soviet Republic. The Congress appeals to all prisoners of war to join our ranks and, as revolutionary soldiers, take up arms against the imperialists . . ."*¹⁸

The Congress made a direct appeal to the Army Corps, and invited its troops to remain in Russia to defend the Soviet Government. The shift in the aims and policies of the Internationalists, from promoting upheavals in Europe to defending the Soviet Government, is evident from a comparison of the above resolution with the text of the resolution which had been adopted at the meeting of prisoners of war held in the Club of Nobility on December 16, 1917. It was because of this new policy that whatever remained of the Battalions of Internationalists on the front against Berlin at Pskov, Narva and in the Ukraine after the conclusion of peace on March 3, was now deployed on the home fronts against the liberal and patriotic forces opposing the Bolshevik usurpation of power.

Meanwhile, the activities of the Bureau of Prisoners of War progressed well. The most effective mode of work proved congresses convened in places in which the concentration of prisoners of war was high. One of the first congresses was held in Samara as

early as January 18, 1918. A resolution adopted petitioned the Soviet Government to permit the local Club of Prisoners of War to organize its members into a Battalion of Internationalists. Two such congresses were organized later in Moscow; one was held on February 26 and other on March 14. This latter meeting decided to lay the foundation for the Communist International, convened the First All-Russian Congress of Prisoners of War and invited all foreign civilians living in Russia to participate. Three committees were set up to take charge of the organizational, political and propaganda affairs.

Subsequently to that the First All-Russian Congress of Prisoners of War was held in Moscow from April 14 to 16. Its opening session was addressed by Lenin and then by Romanian, German, Hungarian, and Czech representatives, who pointed out that the Internationalists had one main task: to defend the Soviet power. The Congress was attended by over 1,000 delegates who represented 55 provincial camp committees, which in turn represented some 100,000 prisoners of war organized in the Clubs of Internationalists.¹⁹ These were political groups of Bolshevik sympathizers which functioned in the camps. They appeared shortly after the Bolshevik coup in November 1917, when the entire administration of each camp was placed in their hands by the Soviet authorities. Conceived originally as bodies of camp self-government the clubs were soon assigned the task of canvassing among prisoners of war and, finally, of forming volunteers into the Battalions of Internationalists.

For the prisoners of war detained in Central Asia a congress was held in Tashkent on April 14. The representatives of several large camps in Central Siberia gathered in Irkutsk on April 15. Those representing West Siberian camps met in Krasnoyarsk, and delegates from Eastern Siberia at Kansk. These two last congresses were held in middle of April.²⁰

The purpose of all these and other congresses was to furnish the delegates from distant camps and localities with instructions, propaganda material and money so that upon returning home they could organize the Battalions of Internationalists and introduce Soviet power into regions otherwise inaccessible to the government. The establishment of hundreds of local centres of Soviet rule in Russia, and particularly Siberia, during March and April was to a large extent due to the activities of the

Bureau of Prisoners of War. The consolidation of Soviet control over industrial enterprises in distant parts of Russia and Siberia was also due to a large degree to the activities of the Clubs of Internationalists, which functioned almost in every factory employing these highly skilled foreign nationals since the Tsarist days.²¹

A major change in the organization of the Clubs of Internationalists and the Battalions of Internationalists was prompted by a strong protest from Berlin, which carefully watched the efforts of the Bolsheviks to incite German nationals in Russia to overthrow the Kaiser and his Imperial Government. A radiogram of April 19 to Moscow protested against this subversive activity carried out particularly in Omsk, Tomsk and Yekaterinburg. The German Government demanded that the following measures must be executed at once: (1) its nationals in Omsk disarmed and placed under guard of reliable government troops; (2) administration of the camps, especially in Omsk and Yekaterinburg, taken over by Russian authorities until arrival of German Exchange Commissions; (3) Germans and Austrians must be separated; (4) officers re-established in their former ranks; (5) the railway station in Omsk occupied by government forces to ensure a safe return of prisoners of war from Eastern Siberia; (6) congresses of prisoners of war forbidden.²²

The Soviet Government promptly replied that the propaganda activities among prisoners of war had been discontinued at the time of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, and that the government took no part in political activities of the prisoners. With regard to their meetings, congresses and other activities, the prisoners enjoyed the same rights and civil liberties as Russian nationals and could exercise them freely.²³

With the protest of Berlin fenced off by this cable the Soviet Government took steps to safeguard the military organizations of prisoners of war which, by that time, formed a significant part of its armed forces. First, Russian citizenship was conferred upon all foreign nationals serving in the ranks of the Red Army by a decree of April 21.²⁴ Second, on April 23 Trotsky ordered the local Soviets to disarm immediately all prisoners of war and intern them in the camps, stating that this must be done in order to comply with the request of the German Government.²⁵

As technically there were no foreign nationals in the government's armed forces, the Internationalists now paraded as Russian citizens, the core of military power of the government remained intact.

The protest of the German Government prompted the Bolsheviks to change the name of the central organization of the Internationalists. The Bureau assumed the name of the Soviet of Foreign Workers and Peasants, and by a decree issued on April 27 this was further transformed into the Central Collegium of Prisoners of War and Refugees (Centroplenbiezh) ²⁶ This body was later dissolved, and its national sections became attached to the Central Executive Committee of the Bolshevik Party as the newly formed Communist Parties of individual nationalities.

Activities in the Russian Republic

Four elements were involved in the mobilization drive of Trotsky, mounted on March 21, to organize a new army of 500,000 troops for the government.

In the first place were Trotsky's negotiations with the Allies for military assistance. The second element was his attempt to recruit, through the Czech Communists, the 15,000 troops of "proletarian origin" from the Army Corps for service in the Red forces. The third element consisted of a number of measures undertaken by the government to enlist, on a voluntary basis, Russian nationals. And the fourth element, which in course of a few weeks became the most important one, entailed the intensification of activities among the prisoners of war of the Central Powers.

The first two efforts failed, as we have seen. The negotiations to secure assistance from the Allies had not progressed far beyond their opening stage, initiated on March 18, and terminated at the beginning of April. Also the Czech Communists, as the second effort, failed to induce the "proletarian element" of the Army Corps to come over to the Bolsheviks and delivered only a pitiful number of 120 recruits. As for the results of the third effort, the canvassing among Russian nationals, the evidence cited by Kakurin indicates that as late as April 9 no substantial results had been achieved. The Soviet Government scored, however, a remarkable success in its

work among prisoners of war. It will be recalled that during April 1918 this activity was much accelerated and that several congresses were organized all over the country. These, undoubtedly, contributed a large number of volunteers to the Bolshevik troops which at the end of April amounted, as we have estimated, perhaps to 50,000 on the territory of the Russian Republic.

It is difficult to estimate the number of prisoners of war who had joined those 50,000 troops for one reason or another at each particular time. This is because the evidence, which is cited below, is far from complete and therefore all our estimates must remain provisional and tentative until new evidence is available.

This evidence draws upon reports of American military and diplomatic personnel in Russia. These documents were prepared by the Assistant Military Attache in Moscow, Captain E. F. Riggs, who based himself upon messages of American Consuls from various parts of Russia and Siberia and on reports of other personnel operating in Russia.

The drive for a comprehensive report about prisoners of war in Russia was initiated by a request of the Chief of American Military Mission in Vologda, Lt. Colonel L. A. Ruggles, who requested the American Consul in Moscow on March 14 for a dossier of all telegrams concerning the prisoners of war received by the Consulate from the Consuls. The Moscow Consulate dispatched to Ruggles the following messages of Consuls: from Jenkins at Chita reports dated March 26 and 29 and April 1, 5, 12; from Thomson at Omsk reports dated April 5 and 6; from MacGowan at Irkutsk reports dated March 27 and 30 and April 1, 3, 4, 8 and 12; from Nielsen at Samara reports dated March 26 and 30 and April 1 and 4.

All this material and reports from Consular Agents at Orenburg, Nizhnii Novgorod, Tsaritsyn, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Moscow, Viatka and places in Turkestan and Siberia, and reports of military personnel, were summarized by Riggs into a comprehensive document entitled a *Preliminary Report on Enemy War-Prisoners in Russia* and written on June 8. It was a short document which gave only some preliminary estimates because, as Riggs stated, the telegrams from the Consular officers were not complete.

By July, however, enough evidence was on hand to enable

Riggs to put out another report, this covering several important aspects about the prisoners of war. The report had the following sections: I. Numbers; II. German Military Prisoners; III. German Civilian Prisoners; IV. Austrian Prisoners; V. Prisoners of War in the Red Army; VI. War Prisoners and the Bolsheviks; VII. Repatriation of Prisoners; VIII. Officers; IX. German Civilian Prisoners; X. Prisoners of War Against the Czechoslovaks; XI. Head for Head Agreement; XII. German and Austrian Commissions of Evacuation. The report was a seven-page document entitled *The Enemy Prisoners of War in Russia*, dated in Vologda on July 9, and it drew upon every bit of information on each topic available at that time.

Another indispensable source regarding the prisoners of war in Siberia are reports of the American Military Attache in Peking, Major W.S. Drysdale, and the French Military Attache in Peking, Captain Pichon.²⁷

Any study of the prisoners of war in Russia and Siberia in spring months of 1918 must start with considering the total number of prisoners of war interned in Russia and Siberia at the time of the Bolshevik *coup*. The nearest available figures related to September 1917.

According to Golovin, the total number of prisoners of war taken by Russia on all fronts, from the beginning of war until middle of September 1917, amounted to 1,961,328. Out of this, 19,780 had been repatriated to the countries of the Central Powers; 1,484 sent to neutral countries as sick; 51,608 died; 35,753 escaped from camps; 39,278 had been released from camps and organized into armed forces of the Allies in Russia. These latter men formed the Czech Army Corps, the Serbian Army Corps, the Polish Legion and other groups. By September 14, 1917 the total number of prisoners of war in the camps had thus been reduced to 1,813,453. Out of this number 1.6 million were Austro-Hungarians, 143,000 Germans and 63,000 Turks. The men were interned in camps of several regions of the Russian Empire.

The campaign for the establishment of the Clubs of Prisoners of War and the formation of the Battalions of Internationalists, which means for direct recruitment into the Red Army, developed unevenly in various parts of Russia. An approximate picture of how many prisoners of war joined the Bolsheviks up

to the second half of May 1918 can be obtained only if the problem is dealt with region by region. We take the Russian Republic first.

From available evidence it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of prisoners of war who joined the Bolsheviks on the territory of the Russian Republic from the beginning of the campaign in January until the second half of May, and all estimates must be inferred.

The second half of May is an important landmark for several reasons. First, the canvassing among prisoners of war reached its peak, in fact was beyond it, and therefore it had drained the camps of the enthusiasts willing to join the Red forces. Second, the activities of German and Austrian Repatriation Commissions, which had started functioning already at the beginning of May in many places of European Russia, tightened up the discipline and by and large arrested the influx of volunteers for the Red forces. Third, it was during that period that the Internationalists emerged on the scene as a factor playing a vital role in the origin of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict.

According to Elsa Brandstrom, a Swedish Red Cross official who co-operated with Russian authorities in prisoners of war affairs, some 90,000 inmates of camps joined the Bolsheviks.²⁸ Out of these men, states Ulianov, about 50,000 fought on various fronts of the civil war in Russia in November 1918.²⁹ Another estimate is given by Zharov who says that between 1917 and 1920 the total number of prisoners of war serving in various units of the Red forces was between 139-159,000, of which 70-80,000 were Hungarians, 30-40,000 Chinese, 9,600 Czechs and Slovaks and about 30,000 Yugoslavs.³⁰

Although these figures are extremely useful to judge the overall success of the Bolsheviks with the prisoners of war, they are of little assistance in our effort to estimate the number of prisoners in the Red forces in middle of May 1918, and on territory of the Russian Republic, which is relevant to our study.

But a reconstruction is not entirely hopeless, although the estimate might not be too accurate. The first thing to consider is that in September 1917 there were some 773,000 prisoners interned in the camps of the following regions of the Russian Republic: Moscow Okrug 252,000, Kazan Okrug 285,000,

Petrograd Okrug 61,000, Dvinsk Okrug 55,000, Minsk Okrug 78,000, and Turkestan 41,000). It can be assumed that the camps in the Minsk and the Dvinsk regions had been dissolved because of the proximity of the front after the conclusion of the peace treaty in March 1918, and that therefore about 639,000 men remained on the territory of the Russian Republic in middle of May 1918, before the Repatriation Commissions started functioning.

The second element to consider is that at the time of the First All-Russian Congress of Prisoners of War, held in Moscow in middle of April, the 1,000 delegates came from 55 regional camps and represented some 100,000 men already organized in the Clubs of Internationalists. This would mean that the 100,000 members of the Clubs of Internationalists, who for one or other reason sympathized with the Bolsheviks, represented about 15 per cent of the total number of 639,000 prisoners of war on the territory of the Russian Republic, if these figures are correct. But it must be emphasized here that this does not mean that the entire lot had been converted to Bolshevism and were ready to die for the Soviet regime. A great number of them had joined because of privileges in treatment and food, good money, freedom of movement outside camps and other advantages.

Considering then this great number of prisoners of war sympathizing with the Soviet regime, it is quite conceivable that out of these 100,000 men each fifth, which is a very low estimate, could have joined the Battalions of Internationalists in larger cities, or the Red Guards in small localities, up to the second half of May. On the basis of this estimate, the Internationalists could have contributed some 20,000 volunteers, and perhaps even more, to the 50,000 troops which the government commanded at that time.

This estimate is closely corroborated by figures available for the end of April 1918, which show the following distribution of the Internationalists: Orel 150, Penza 500, Balashina 300, Bogorodsk 500, Rostov 100, Nizhnii Novgorod 900, Samara 1,500, Perm 1,500, Irbit 700, Kushva 515, Alapeievsk 280, Yegorchinskie Kupi 300, Yekaterinburg 3,000, Cheliabinsk 1,500, Orenburg 750, Novonikolaievsk 100, Omsk 5,000,

Petropavlovsk 300 and Krasnoyarsk 1,200. The total was 19,095,³¹ close to our estimate of 20,000.

The number of foreign nationals in the armed forces of the Bolsheviks thus amounted to some 40 per cent. This, certainly, is a high percentage, corroborated to some extent by Czech sources which show that the Bolshevik forces fighting the Army Corps in the Volga basin in June consisted up to 70 per cent of foreign nationals.³² But by that time the conditions were to change greatly because of the Czech-Bolshevik fighting with the result the number of the Internationalists in the Red forces considerably increased.

Our estimate that perhaps 40 per cent of the armed forces of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Republic consisted of foreign nationals relates to middle of May, when the Repatriation Commissions of the Central Powers started their activities.

One report of the representative of the National Council residing in Samara, F. Fiser, dated May 10, throws some light upon the efforts of Berlin to get under control its nationals in Russia. Fiser reported that the Danish Red Cross and the German Repatriation Commission had been hard at work to dissuade the prisoners from volunteering for the Red Army and refrain from anti-German and unpatriotic propaganda. Fiser said that Berlin had been sorting its nationals in Samara according to their political views and kept a record of those under the spell of Bolshevik propaganda. German officers in the camps prepared lists of those disloyal to Berlin, and the names of men serving in the Red Army were entered into Black Books.³³

Even the Army Corps came under the review of these commissions and at one point a member of German Repatriation Commission, Captain Sivers, approached its command in Samara to negotiate for repatriation of the Czechs. He considered them prisoners of war and, as Austrian citizens, liable to repatriation.³⁴

The struggle between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks which was to break out at the end of May had a profound effect upon the prisoners of war of the Central Powers in Russia with the result that their number in the Red armed forces significantly increased. These foreign nationals, fighting now the Czechs, consisted of five elements.

In the first place were the old-timers, who had joined for ideo-

logical and other reasons a long time before the outbreak of the struggle.

The second group was composed of men who joined under the impact of Bolshevik propaganda after the outbreak of the fighting. The commissars argued that the conflict had been precipitated by the Czechs, upon instructions of the Allies, in order to bring down the Soviet Government preliminary to a massive Allied intervention to reopen the Eastern Front. This propaganda found a favourable response among a considerable number of rabid Austro-Hungarian and German nationalists who, until then, frowned upon the Bolsheviks. The aid which these men now were prepared to extend was not to defend the Soviet regime but protect the interests of Berlin and Vienna against the possibility of the reopening of the Eastern Front.

The third group which aided the Bolsheviks in their struggle with the Czechs was composed of prisoners of war who had actually been advised by the Repatriation Commissions to do so. Riggs reported that upon the arrival of these commissions in Perm, Yekarinburg, Tomsk, Omsk and Irkutsk, the influx of volunteers for the Red forces suddenly increased.²⁵

The fourth group was composed of German, Austrian and Hungarian prisoners of war who had organized themselves into purely German, Austrian and Hungarian units under the command of their own officers. This was particularly true in Siberia. Captain R. Gajda, commanding the Czech forces around Lake Baikal, reported a number of encounters with forces composed exclusively of prisoners of war organized on the traditional lines of German and Austrian *Wehrmacht* and commanded by officers restored to their former ranks. It must be emphasized that these troops were not an integral part of the Red Army, but fought as its ally.²⁶

The fifth group consisted of men whom Berlin had offered as assistance against the Czechs. In middle of June the Soviet Government approached Berlin with a request for permission to arm all German prisoners of war in Russia so that they could be sent to the front against Czechs. We know that later some regular German troops, and German specialists and technicians, were dispatched against the Czechs;²⁷ also these men were not a part of the Red Army.

While the Germans, Hungarians and Austrians came for-

ward in great numbers to assist the Bolsheviks, the Latvian Regiments, which maintained the Soviet regime in Petrograd and Moscow since the October days, refused to fight the Czechs. Also the Petrograd Soviet refused to organize a mobilization drive among factory workers in order to raise troops against the Czechs.³⁵ The Latvians knew the Army Corps as a progressive and patriotic force since the October days, and the Czech political leadership had a great deal of socialist friends among the members of Petrograd Soviet with whom they had co-operated under the Provisional Government in 1917.

The increase of the Bolshevik armed forces during June and July was not only due to the influx of Russian nationals as the result of a mobilization decree of June 12, but also due to the increased participation of foreign nationals in the campaign against the Czechs. At the end of July the Bolshevik forces on the territory of the Russian Republic consisted of 116,000 infantry and 7,900 cavalry; out of this number 40,000 troops, about 30 per cent, were deployed against the Czechs (Document No. 4). As Zmrhal pointed out, the forces operating against the Czechs in the Volga basin, i.e., around Penza, Samara, Simbirsk and Kazan, consisted up to 70 per cent of foreign nationals. This percentage was established by the Czech command, which after every battle and engagement ascertained the nationality of the dead and those captured as prisoners.³⁶ But it must be pointed out at once that this high percentage was attained only at the front against the Czechs, and that by no stretch of imagination could it be applied to the entire territory of the Russian Republic.

Another important question is how effective was the propaganda of the Bolsheviks before the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict, which aimed at corroding patriotism and loyalty of captive prisoners of war of the Central Powers in order to turn them into "revolutionary soldiers" ready to strike against their own *Vaterland*. The question is what percentage of those interned in camps had volunteered for the Bolsheviks. No figures are available to give even an approximate estimate of this percentage. But some light is thrown on this problem by Czech sources, though the evidence is marginal. *Ceskoslovenský denník* of April 4 reported that in several larger cities of Central Russia the Battalions of Internationalists had been set up, and

that in Penza out of 4,000 prisoners about 500 joined the local Battalion. This would mean that in this particular instance 12.5 per cent responded to the calls of the local Soviet and the Bureau of Prisoners of War. Though this percentage could not be applied to other cities of the Russian Republic, nevertheless it is a useful pointer regarding the situation obtaining in Central Russia, in places in which the Czech troops stood immobilized, which concerns us most.

It is quite certain that such a high percentage was not obtained in peripheral regions of Russia. Large portions of the western regions of Russia and the Ukraine were under occupation by the Central Powers in February-March, and the prisoners of war either ran away or were repatriated to Germany, as was the case of 406,000 inmates of camps of Kiev Okrug. As for the prisoners in the ranks of the Bolshevik forces in southern Russia and the Don region, no figures are available. The percentage was probably small, for the Bolsheviks themselves had only meagre forces in those parts in April 1918. Another factor adverse to agitation among prisoners in those parts was General Alexeiev's control of some important centres and cities in the region. And as for the Caucasus, the inmates of camps were mostly of Turkish nationality and do not concern us. The number of volunteers was probably not great.

From all these peripheral areas of the Russian Republic only Turkestan showed a considerable influence of Bolshevik propaganda on the prisoners. Turkestan had 41,000 prisoners working on cotton fields. Following the Congress of Prisoners of War, held in Tashkent on April 14, the Bureau's agents intensified their activities with the result that the local camps contributed 5,000 men to the Red forces. This amounted to 12.2 per cent, and approximates the Penza sample.⁴⁰ The developments in Turkestan were reported upon by the American Consul at Samara, Nielson, on April 4. The Consul reported that on that day three Austrian officers and several men arrived in Samara from Tashkent. They were members of the Austrian Red Cross and had been dispatched from Vienna three months before to take care of wounded and sick prisoners of war. They told the Americans that the prisoners in Turkestan were restless, fought and imprisoned their officers and formed the

Clubs of Internationalists in their camps. A great number of them had strong pro-Bolshevik sympathies.⁴¹

The effectiveness of the Soviet Government to induce the prisoners to join the Red forces can be more approximately judged only if an enquiry is made into the situation in the regions in which the Bureau concentrated its effort. On the territory of the Russian Republic the Petrograd, the Moscow and the Kazan regions and Turkestan, having 639,000 men in the camps, served as a reservoir of recruits for the Soviet Government. [Taking now the estimate of Brandstrom that 90,000 volunteers joined the Bolsheviks on the one hand, and the 639,000 men in camps of these four regions on the other, it appears that 15.6 per cent of them joined the Bolsheviks.

It should be immediately emphasized, however, that this high percentage must be scaled down because not all the 90,000 volunteers came from these four regions and that some of them hailed from peripheral areas and Siberia. Allowing for this, the number in these four regions of the Russian Republic, the pillars of Bolshevik power, comes perhaps to 12 per cent, and approximates the results obtained in Penza and Turkestan before the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict.⁴²

Activities in Siberia

The Soviet conquest of Siberia was gradual. As late as May 1918 only some important cities were in the hands of the Bolshevik commissars while the country was administered by municipal bodies mostly composed of members of other political parties. Even in individual regions of Siberia the process of bolshevization of cities differed considerably. Western Siberia and its principal cities, with Omsk as its capital, were captured earliest. Central Siberia, governed from its metropolis Irkutsk, did not show much of Bolshevik influence even in April, except in the city itself and a few other towns along the Trans-Siberian line. In Eastern Siberia, in the Pri-Amur District as it was called, with Chita and Khabarovsk on both ends of the railway line, hundreds of miles of territory were controlled by only a few and widely dispersed centres of Soviet power. The last section of Siberia, the Maritime Province, with Vladivostok as its capital, also defied full Soviet control until late spring of 1918.

Thus only a few larger towns on the Trans-Siberian railway were in the Bolshevik hands.

Western Siberia

Omsk, as the centre of Bolshevik propaganda activity in Western Siberia, was assigned the task of reinforcing the ranks of the Red Army in all Siberia by volunteers recruited from among the prisoners of war. The reason was that the Omsk Okrug had in its camps 207,000 prisoners, most of all Siberia. Irkutsk had only 36,000, and the whole Pri-Amur District 14,000. The gates of the camps in the Omsk Okrug were thrown open in middle of February, when the Bureau of Prisoners of War dispatched to Omsk groups of agitators composed of several nationalities. At that time the Soviet Government entertained a notion that should it reject the peace terms it would have to evacuate the European Russia as far as Omsk to save itself from Berlin's pressure. Moreover, Omsk had to be built into a rear base from which the Bolsheviks could launch a counter-thrust against Berlin, as Stalin had indicated to Klecanda on March 15. Resources and manpower in this region were plentiful.

How many Russian nationals the Bolshevik agitators succeeded in enlisting into the Red Army in Omsk is not known. A powerful anti-Bolshevik organization functioned in that city, seriously hampering their efforts.⁴³ But a remarkable success was attained with the prisoners of war. In fact, the troops raised from among the prisoners in Omsk, and armed with weapons from the city's arsenal, formed the main element of the forces of the Irkutsk Soviet which were placed in charge of military campaigns against Semenov. Japanese intelligence agents operating in the region reported to the Japanese General Staff that an armed expedition of 1,500 prisoners had been dispatched from Omsk to Irkutsk on March 28.⁴⁴ This was the entire garrison of the Omsk Soviet and, as has already been mentioned, a Czech detachment of 180 men participated in that expedition. This was the famous First Omsk Battalion of Internationalists.

Though the very last soldier was taken away from Omsk and the city remained practically without armed forces, the

agitators and the political commissars left behind raised and armed in a short time another group, which was again deployed against Semenov. An American officer, Major Walter S. Drysdale, who made several trips from Kharbin to Irkutsk in order to assess the number of armed prisoners serving in the Bolshevik ranks, reported on April 10 that in Irkutsk he inspected 47 railroad cars with 600 armed prisoners who had arrived from Omsk and headed for the anti-Semenov front. The men were mostly Hungarians, and upon arrival in Irkutsk proceeded to the local prisoners of war camp to conduct agitation to reinforce their group with fresh recruits. All were armed with rifles and machine guns and provided with food rations. They told Drysdale that two more groups were on the way; one of 150 and other of 70 men. He was told that about 16,000 prisoners had been organized and armed in Omsk, ready to follow their comrades against Semenov; but it was impossible for Drysdale to verify this statement⁴⁵ Whatever the correct figures might have been, the value of this information lies in the indication that Omsk was the centre of a successful recruitment campaign organized to bolster the Siberian Soviets and defend the Bolshevik regime against Semenov in far away Manchuria.

Another report of Major Drysdale, dated in Peking on April 24, stated that according to fresh reports from Irkutsk some 3,000 armed troops of the Omsk Battalion of Internationalists had passed through Irkutsk to the east and that another Battalion of 8,000 troops remained in Omsk.⁴⁶ This would corroborate, to a degree at least, the information given to Drysdale in Irkutsk, and incorporated into his own report of April 10 to the effect that Omsk gave about 18,000 armed prisoners of war to the Bolsheviks. The Internationalists in Omsk were commanded by a Hungarian named Ligetti at that time.

The situation in Omsk did not escape the attention of Germany and soon a fierce battle ensued between Berlin and Moscow over the control of prisoners of war. The radiogram which Berlin had sent to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs on April 19 protested against the agitation which the Bolsheviks carried among its nationals in Omsk, and against

launched early in February, until the end of April, perhaps 20,000 men volunteered for the Battalions of Internationalists in Omsk. Whether the Bolsheviks in Omsk induced the Russian nationals to enlist into the ranks of the Red Army, and how many, is also not known. It seems that in this respect the Omsk Bolsheviks were not too successful, and that the small number of those recruited was attached to the Omsk Soviet to maintain internal order in the city and boost the prestige of an administration engulfed by the sea of foreign nationals. It is very probable that the administration in Omsk at the end of April rested upon bayonets of foreigners, who perhaps constituted 75 per cent, if not more, of the armed forces which the Omsk Soviet commanded.

During May the situation in Omsk greatly changed. Kakurin reports only 1,500 troops there in May, as the rest had been sent on several previous occasions against Semenov.⁴⁸ Whether these 1,500 men were Russian nationals, or not, is hard to say.

A similar situation as in Omsk obtained in almost all cities of Western Siberia during May. The local Soviets were deprived of the armed support deriving from the prisoners, while the Russians either stood aloof or some of them joined various anti-Bolshevik organizations emerging in Western Siberia at that time.

During May the Soviet power in Western Siberia suffered a phenomenal decline and all major cities of this region—Omsk, Tomsk, Taiga, Novonikolaïevsk, Barnaul, Semipalatinsk and Krasnoyarsk—seemed to command less than 7,000 troops. This figure is derived from a Soviet source, which explains why several anti-Bolshevik uprisings flared up in Western Siberia at the end of May, and why during June and July the Soviet administration was so easily deposed on all this vast territory.⁴⁹ The main reason for the sudden collapse of Soviet power in Western Siberia was the fact that the outburst of a whole series of anti-Bolshevik uprisings coincided with the outbreak of military operations of the Czechs against the Bolsheviks at the end of May, and that the capture of several major cities on the Trans-Siberian line by the Czechs gave a tremendous impetus to the overthrow of the Bolsheviks by their local opponents.

When the struggle between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks

engulfed the Omsk region it became again the prisoners of war, though of a different brand, who came to the rescue of the Bolsheviks and contributed a large number of troops to the forces fighting the Czechs. These new men, however, had nothing to do with the Internationalists, the soldiers of revolution. They consisted of conservative German and Austro-Hungarian nationalists who extended their armed support to the Bolsheviks not for ideological reasons, but because it was in the interest of Berlin to defeat the Czech Army Corps, an armed group of Western Allies with whom Berlin was still at war. In fact, as we have seen, they have done so with the connivance, if not explicit instructions, of Berlin.

Central Siberia

The situation in Irkutsk, and for that matter in the whole of Central Siberia, was quite different from that obtaining in Omsk due to the fact that the camps of prisoners of war in those parts had only 35,000 men. Though the propaganda activity in camps had been initiated early in March and resulted in the establishment of several Clubs of Internationalists, there was no need for the Irkutsk Soviet to arm the inmates of these camps. A good number of men of former Tsarist garrison stationed in the city, some 1,500 out of 11,000, remained there and rallied behind the Soviet. In addition, the Irkutsk Soviet raised a Red Guard unit of about 900 men.²⁰ These two armed groups proved sufficient for the local Soviet to maintain itself in power. A special Revolutionary Staff, to direct military operations against Semenov, was set up under the Central Committee of Irkutsk Soviet, which drew heavily upon Omsk for troops, as we have seen. Irkutsk itself was a quiet town, and it is incredible with how few troops the Bolsheviks controlled the vast territories of Central Siberia.

As in Central Russia, so in Siberia, the Bolsheviks experienced a great difficulty in attempting to induce a genuine proletarian element to join the Red Army and defend their Soviet regime. The American Consul at Irkutsk, MacGowan, reported to the Consulate in Moscow on March 27 that on the previous night the Bolsheviks had organized a meeting of 2,000 railway workers in one of the suburbs of Irkutsk and invited them to

quit work and join the Red Army. All refused saying that "let the Allies come or the devil himself; we shall not be a cannon fodder".⁵¹

The relative tranquillity in Irkutsk disappeared with the Japanese landing in Vladivostok on April 5, which had a profound effect upon the attitude of Irkutsk Bolsheviks towards prisoners of war. The Irkutsk Soviet discussed this landing on April 5 and informed the Central Government in Moscow by a cable on the same day. The communication addressed to Karakhan suggested, among other things, that the Internationalists be armed *en masse* as one of the mobilization measures.⁵² Lenin himself answered by a cable on April 5; he approved the evaluation of the situation made by the Irkutsk Soviet and agreed with its suggestion to mobilize and arm the Internationalists on a large scale.⁵³ This telegraphic exchange initiated a massive mobilization drive of the Irkutsk Soviet, which was described in broad outlines in a cable to Trotsky later on April 5.⁵⁴ The drive ordered all Soviets in Western, Central and Eastern Siberia to set up military staffs and mobilize all available resources. A special Supreme Military Staff, set up under the Irkutsk Soviet, was to co-ordinate and direct the entire defence work. The impact of these directives upon the activities of the Soviet in Omsk accounted for the increase in the number of Internationalists mobilized in Omsk during April, who were then placed at the disposal of the Irkutsk Soviet for the anti-Semenov campaign and, eventually, to fight Japan.

More about the activities of the Bolsheviks in Irkutsk can be gathered from an account given by Colonel Yakovlev, who was in charge of prisoners of war camps in the city, to the acting British Vice-Consul in Irkutsk sometime around March 15. Yakovlev stated that many fully armed German prisoners had been regularly arriving in Irkutsk from Tomsk, and that the authorities planned to concentrate men and weapons in great quantity in Irkutsk. The Red Army was under formation in Irkutsk for some time and a Swedish national, Sternberg, was in charge. One group was composed mainly of Germans, about 70 per cent; the rest were Austro-Hungarians. Another group was composed of Russian nationals, but Yakovlev gave no figure. German officers commanded both groups, and from Petrograd a former member of the German General Staff was

on his way to Irkutsk to take charge of the overall command. About 4,000 Cossacks had joined the Bolsheviks under a Hungarian named Lazo, who commanded the operations against Semenov. There were 80,000 German prisoners in Siberia, many of whom volunteered for the Red Army, and Yakovlev had been asked how many of them he could accommodate if concentrated in Irkutsk. He estimated that he could accommodate 10,000, and then was told that this number would be brought to Irkutsk soon. Yakovlev further informed the Vice-Consul that orders had been given out to destroy all tunnels and bridges on the Trans-Siberian railway as soon as information were received that hostile forces started a move from the Far East. The Internationalists guarded the arsenal in Irkutsk, which stored some 10,000 rifles and a good supply of ammunition. To enable the Austrians to return home a special clandestine office operated in Irkutsk to provide them with false passports.⁵⁵ Yakovlev, however, does not make it clear whether the office was managed by the Bolsheviks or Vienna's agents operating in Siberia.

It is not certain whether the Bolsheviks really brought those 10,000 prisoners of war to Irkutsk and how many of them joined the Red Army. From a report of Major Drysdale of April 10 it appears that whatever had been raised in Irkutsk was later sent against Semenov, and that only 1,000 to 1,500 armed Internationalists remained in the city.⁵⁶ As in other places, also in Irkutsk the repatriation drive of Berlin badly affected the military position of the local Soviet. Kakurin indicates that at the end of May there were no armed forces to speak of in Irkutsk.⁵⁷

Considering Yakovlev's and Drysdale's reports it would seem that in the entire province of Central Siberia the Bolsheviks commanded a support of about 3,000 Internationalists at the end of May. But the German and Austrian Repatriation Commissions and the Swedish and Danish Red Cross had the situation well in hand in the largest camps of Central Siberia soon and the influx of volunteers for the Red Army ceased. The most important aspect of this Central Siberian situation was that perhaps 75 per cent of the entire Bolshevik forces there consisted of foreign nationals. It is not, therefore, surprising that this high percentage of prisoners, almost all dressed

in German and Austrian uniforms, created among the Allied observers in Russia and Siberia an impression that Berlin had accomplished a peaceful conquest of Siberia through infiltration of the Red Army.

The activities of the Bolsheviks among prisoners of war caused an understandable anxiety to Allied Consuls in Irkutsk and to the Representative of the Danish Mission in Irkutsk, Melle Holst, who was in charge of Austrian prisoners. The American Consul in Irkutsk MacGowan reported to the Consulate in Moscow on April 1 that the Danish Representative had approached the Consular Corps with a request for a joint protest against the Bolsheviks arming the prisoners, and that the Consular Corps dealt with the matter on the same day. It resolved to lodge a protest with the Irkutsk Soviet against arming the inmates of camps and demand their immediate disarmament, return to camps and posting adequate and reliable government troops to guard them. This was in accordance with the new directives issued by the Chief of the Danish Legation in Russia, and Melle Holst had been so instructed only a few days earlier.

MacGowan further related some experiences which Holst had with the Irkutsk Bolsheviks, who made his task not an easy matter. Receiving an advanced telegraphic information that a train of armed prisoners was on its way from Omsk to Irkutsk, the Danish representative called upon Military Commissar Sternberg to protest. Although Sternberg promised to investigate, he in fact ordered the train to proceed towards Chita without delay. The next day Holst learnt that a detachment from that train, which had disembarked, went to the local prisoners of war camp to conduct agitation and that two Austrian officers, who resisted the attempt to subvert their men, were arrested by the Bolsheviks. He then rushed to the camp, and questioned the Internationalists. *First they pretended to be Russians, but their looks gave them away. As there was no point in further denying their true identity the men, who were Hungarians, even showed him the travel orders and other papers authorizing them to conduct agitation.* The papers had been issued by the First Omsk Battalion of Internationalists to which they belonged. MacGowan concluded his report with an observation that there was no reason to doubt the goodwill of

the Danish Mission; however, its appeal to the Consular Corps for assistance showed its helplessness in dealing with the Bolsheviks.⁵⁸ The situation much improved when the German and Austrian Repatriation and Exchange Commissions arrived to take care of their nationals.

When the struggle between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks engulfed this region at the end of May, the picture changed entirely. The prisoners of war threw themselves into the fight to defeat the Czechs and free the railway line leading to Central Russia and Germany. They organized themselves under their own commanders and constituted some 75 per cent of the Bolshevik troops in Irkutsk and up to 90 per cent around Lake Baikal.

Eastern Siberia

In Eastern Siberia, the Pri-Amur District and the Maritime Province the situation was similar to that in Irkutsk. Though the Clubs of Internationalists had been established and fraternization of the Bolsheviks with the inmates of camps was under way since March, the arming of prisoners took place only after the Irkutsk Soviet declared general mobilization on April 5.

The American Consul-General from Chita Jenkins reported on March 26 that:

"Considerable forces of the Red Guards are assembling in these provinces along the Manchurian front to fight Semenov. They will almost certainly resist Japanese if the latter come. Austrian and German prisoners are serving with the Red Guards as Red Cross helpers, but there is no evidence as yet of the enlistment of these prisoners in the Red Guards. However, at a public meeting today the prisoners adopted a resolution denouncing war and Imperialism and favouring the Russian proletariat and the fight against imperialism. About 400 were present out of a total 8,000 prisoners. They were mostly Austrians . . ."⁵⁹

On March 29 Jenkins reported:

"A Hungarian prisoner tells me that the prisoners are being organized all over Russia with the object of carrying the revolution into Germany after the War . . ."⁶⁰

Two factors are involved in estimating the Bolshevik forces and the number of prisoners of war serving in them in these three provinces. One is the military position of the Soviets of larger cities along the Amur railway. The other factor consists of the Soviet forces fighting Semenov, under Commander Lazo, which had been draining the manpower of the local Soviets in the whole area since early days of March.

Considering the first factor, a British Intelligence Report of June 14 estimated the Bolshevik troops in this region at 8,400 infantry and 1,300 cavalry.⁶¹ The report commented that since the last estimate the Bolsheviks had increased their forces by 3,000 infantry and 1,300 cavalry. The report further stated that "it is now known that most of the tunnels on the railway south of Lake Baikal have been mined by enemy prisoners of war, doubtless acting with the connivance, if not with the active assistance, of the Bolshevik authorities."⁶²

As elsewhere, the Czech-Bolshevik conflict affected the prisoners of war, who in this area organized themselves into purely German and Austrian units to wage their own war against the Czechs, and the entire picture of Bolshevik manpower changed. Another Intelligence Report, this of American military personnel, stated that on July 29 the Bolsheviks commanded in entire Eastern Siberia 24,000 infantry and 1,350 cavalry. An important aspect of this report is an estimate that out of the 24,000 infantry 18,000 were prisoners of war, i.e., 75 per cent, and that the whole region still had 20,000 unarmed prisoners. This high percentage of foreign nationals in the Red forces reflected the entirely new situation obtaining in Siberia after the Czechs and the Bolsheviks crossed arms.

As for the Bolshevik forces operating against Semenov, an excellent account is given by Morley. According to this author the Bolshevik commander in Chita had 1,200 men on April 5, of whom 800 were Internationalists.⁶³ This amounts to 66 per cent. The percentage is understandable, because most of these men had been recruited from camps in Omsk. Regarding the Bolshevik forces directly engaged against Semenov,

Morley cites an estimate of a Japanese intelligence officer to the effect that when Lazo opened his offensive against Semenov on May 14 he had about 4,000 men, of whom 33 per cent were Internationalists.⁶¹

It is difficult to make an over-all estimate of the percentage of prisoners of war, in the whole of Siberia, who joined the Bolsheviks up to the end of April. Concerning Western Siberia, it appears that while in Omsk and vicinity perhaps up to 30 per cent of the inmates of the camps joined for one or other reason the Red forces, this percentage decreased considerably in other cities of Omsk Guberniia. On this whole territory, having 207,000 men in the camps, the ratio dropped perhaps to 10-15 per cent and approximated the results obtained in Central Russia.⁶⁵ In Central Siberia, with Irkutsk as its centre, there were 36,000 prisoners and perhaps only 10 to 15 per cent of them, at the most, joined the Bolsheviks.⁶⁶ Eastern Siberia, the Pri-Amur Region, had only 14,000 prisoners of war. Until the conflict with the Czechs, at the end of May, it seems that in this region only 5 to 8 per cent of prisoners joined the Red forces.

The conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks fundamentally changed the situation in Siberia. Here, as in Central Russia, a great number of prisoners flocked to the Bolsheviks. The reason was that many patriotic German and Austro-Hungarian nationals considered participation in the battle as a form of war against the Western Allies and hence their generous assistance to the Bolsheviks. The seizure by the Czechs of forward railway centres on the Trans-Siberian line—Penza, Syzran, Samara and Cheliabinsk—was another factor at play. It dashed all prospects for a speedy repatriation and the assistance to the Bolsheviks was a form of self-help to defeat the Czechs and free the railway. The prisoners concentrated in all major railway centres in Siberia suddenly found themselves cut off from all connections with the west and hard pressed by the Czechs advancing from two sides. One group was advancing eastward from Central Russia to Siberia, while another column westward from Vladivostok. This was an enormous ambush, and only resort to arms could break it and free the railway line to the west and Germany.

How many prisoners in these new conditions joined the

Bolsheviks during June and July is not easy to say. Their number was, however, substantial, because as late as November 1918 some 50,000 of them still fought on various fronts of the civil war in Russia and Siberia. And as has already been noted, Zharov estimated that between 1917 and 1920 some 139-159,000 prisoners of war had joined the Red ranks. The high participation of foreign nationals in the Bolshevik armed forces became clearly evident during June and July 1918. Our estimate is that in Omsk it was close to 70 per cent, in Irkutsk up to 80 per cent, at Lake Baikal up to 90 per cent, and in the Pri-Amur District up to 66 per cent. These estimates are based upon Czech and American sources.⁴⁷

Many prisoners primarily fought with the Czechs over the control of the Trans-Siberian railway. If the Czechs were permitted to control it there was no way home except through the Pacific Ocean; but even Vladivostok was in the hands of the Czechs. They were trapped, and the only solution was to fight to break through.

The prisoners of war had a profound effect upon the evolution of Allied policies towards Russia. The French and British Governments advocated sending an Allied expedition into the country; first to arrest the influence of prisoners upon the internal political and military developments, and then to reopen the Eastern Front. The American Government opposed, however, this project because of the conflicting reports concerning the number and significance of armed and unarmed prisoners in Russia and Siberia and the nature of threat they posed to Allied interests. It was not until the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict, which revealed to what extent the Soviet Government was really leaning upon the armed support of the Internationalists, that the position of the advocates of an Allied expedition into Russia was vindicated.

PRISONERS AND ALLIED PLANS FOR INTERVENTION

The mobilization drive of the Soviet Government, which had been mounted among prisoners of war of the Central Powers in Russia and Siberia during January-April, greatly affected the policies of the Allies as well as of the Central Powers towards the Soviet regime.

It was puzzling for the Allied representatives in Russia to

see the Soviet Government launching an intensive programme with enemy nationals and at the same time conducting negotiations with the Allies for military assistance. The evidence from all parts of Russia and Siberia clearly pointed out that the work with enemy prisoners was not a random, but rather the main effort of the government to improve its military posture. Understandably, the Allied circles in Russia began to ask themselves the question of how far the Bolsheviks were prepared to go with a policy clearly incompatible with the contemplated Allied military assistance. Evidence to the effect that the German General Staff had brought Lenin and his party to Russia from Switzerland, in order to take Russia out of war by peace and revolutionary propaganda, made many Allied representatives in Russia to believe that the leading Bolsheviks were German agents.

The arming of prisoners in great numbers during the spring months of 1918 underscored this belief, suggesting that this might have been done if not in direct co-operation with Berlin then at least with its connivance. The Allies in Russia well understood that keeping her immobilized and out of war was the most important strategic task of the German General Staff, and that if some one in Russia could fulfil this requirement it was Lenin and his anti-war and revolutionary government. Hence a belief that Germany was eminently interested in the preservation of the Bolshevik rule and that in an oblique way, through her nationals held in Russia, she was assisting the Bolsheviks to entrench themselves in power. The Allied circles in Russia imagined that such an assistance had been extended by Germany not only to decimate the anti-Bolshevik opposition in order to preclude a removal of the Bolsheviks or to forestall a pro-Ally *coup*, but to checkmate also a *rapprochement* of the Bolsheviks with the Allies. It appeared certain that the dangerously weak military position of the Soviet regime would drive its leaders either into the arms of the Central Powers or the Allies in order to secure assistance against the other adversary who at the moment seemed to pose the most imminent danger to the revolutionary regime. In this context it was suspected that Berlin's assistance to the Bolsheviks with prisoners, coupled with promises of trade and revision of the Brest Treaty, had been extended by Berlin as a pre-emptive bid to

strengthen the Bolshevik regime in order to wean it away from the Allies. These and similar considerations exercised the imagination of the Allied representatives in Russia after the Brest Treaty was signed, and created quite a controversy over the assessment of the Russian scene and policies to be followed.

Germany and the Soviet Government

The question of the extent of the Bolshevik co-operation with Berlin, and of the nature of assistance they had been receiving, is a difficult one, and even today the issue is not fully resolved. The evidence so far available clearly shows the role which the Bolshevik leaders played in the efforts of the German General Staff to bring to the standstill the Russian front in fall of 1917, giving an account of financial and other assistance the Bolsheviks received to that end.

The importance of the Bolsheviks to the grand strategy of Imperial Germany is best revealed in a letter dated 3 December 1917 from Kuhlmann, Secretary of State, to the Foreign Ministry's Liaison Officers at the General Headquarters. Kuhlmann writes:

"The disruption of the Entente and the subsequent creation of political combinations agreeable to us constitute the most important war aim of our diplomacy. Russia appeared to be the weakest link in the enemy chain. The task, therefore, was gradually to loosen it and, when possible, to remove it. This was the purpose of the subversive activity we caused to be carried out in Russia behind the front—in the first place promotion of separatist tendencies and support of the Bolsheviks. It was not until the Bolsheviks had received from us a steady flow of funds through various channels and under different labels that they were in a position to be able to build up their main organ, *Pravda*, to conduct energetic propaganda and appreciably to extend the originally narrow basis of their party. The Bolsheviks have now come to power; how long they will retain power cannot be yet foreseen. They need peace in order to strengthen their own position; on the other hand it is entirely in our interest that we should exploit the period while they are in power, which may be a short one, in order to attain firstly an armistice

and then, if possible, peace. The conclusion of a separate peace would mean the achievement of the desired war aim, namely, a breach between Russia and her Allies. The amount of tension necessarily caused by such a breach would determine the degree of Russia's dependence on Germany, and her future relations with us. Once cast out and cast off by her former Allies, abandoned financially, Russia will be forced to seek our support . . ."⁶⁸

There is also evidence indicating that this aid was continued after the Bolshevik seizure of power, and even extended long after the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March 1918.

Thus the German Ambassador in Moscow, Count Mirbach, reported to Berlin on May 16, 1918 that he was still trying to counter the effects of the Allies, and that he still was giving support to the Bolsheviks. Note the Date! He, however, requested the Foreign Office for instructions whether the over-all situation justified the use of large sums of money in order to promote German interests, and what political trends in Russia he should support should the Bolsheviks fail to hold out. He concluded that if the Bolshevik rule collapsed, for the moment the Allies had the best prospects.

The Secretary of State responded on May 18 by the following instructions to Mirbach:

"Please use larger sums, as it is greatly in our interest that the Bolsheviks should survive. Riezler's funds at your disposal. If further money required, please telegraph how much. It is very difficult to say from here which trend to support after the Bolsheviks' fall. If really hardpressed, the left wing Social Revolutionaries would fall with the Bolsheviks. These parties seem to be the only ones who base their position on the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk. As a party Kadets are anti-German; Monarchists would also work for revision of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty. We have no interest in supporting Monarchists' ideas, which would reunite Russia. On the contrary, we must try to prevent Russian consolidation as far as possible and, from this point of view, we must therefore support the parties further to the left. Kuhlmann."⁶⁹

The matter of support to the Bolsheviks was further pursued by Mirbach, who on June 3, 1918 cabled to the Foreign Office that "due to Entente competition 3 million marks per month (are) necessary. In event of early need for change in our political line, a higher sum must be reckoned with."⁷⁰

The Secretary of State sent a Memorandum to the State Secretary of the Treasury on June 8, 1918 requesting him to make available the sums needed by Mirbach. The Memorandum stated that Mirbach needs 3 million marks a month in order to keep the Bolsheviks oriented towards Germany. Should, however, Germany decide to support other political orientations, in view of the possible fall of the Bolsheviks, Mirbach would need 6 million per month. Kuhlmann pleaded that the money be made available, as Germany must be prepared for any eventuality in order to secure a smooth transition from one ally to another.⁷¹

The Secretary of the Treasury informed Kuhlmann on June 11, 1918 that altogether 40 million marks had been allocated for Mirbach.⁷² It is not certain how much of this money reached Mirbach and the Bolsheviks, for he was assassinated on July 6, 1918. Thus the contention of G.F. Kennan to the effect that the Bolsheviks did not receive any assistance from Germany after the November 1917 coup seems to be unfounded.⁷³

But with regard to the question which interests us most at the moment, whether the Soviet Government launched the project with prisoners in December 1917 upon an understanding with and, perhaps, upon assistance of Berlin, so far not a single piece of evidence is available even to suggest a German hand in it. The initiative either was on the Bolshevik side, or it came from the pro-Bolshevik prisoners interned in camps. But this was to change soon.

To be sure, the developments taking place among prisoners in Russia did not escape attention of Berlin. Already on December 7, 1917 Deputy to the Secretary of State Erzberger sent to the attention of his chief a communication which had been received from Herr Zeise, at Stockholm, reporting upon an extraordinary development taking place in Russia. Zeise reported that several *German Prisoners of War Republics* had been founded in many places in Russia. He said that in several places with a large number of camps the German prisoners, finding

that law and order was broken, had taken into their own hands the business of feeding themselves and administering the camps. They were able not only to take care of themselves, but also to attend to the needs of local population. The villagers were extremely satisfied with such an arrangement and, together with the prisoners, established something like a republican administration, this being governed by German prisoners. Zeise further stated that this surely was a new phenomenon and that Russia, even more than America, was a land of "unlimited possibilities".⁷⁴

How State Secretary Kuhlmann reacted to this communication is not known. His marginal note on it states that a consideration should be given to the possibility of sending a copy of it to the Emperor without, however, revealing the source of information; from further evidence it is clear that such a copy was sent to the Emperor's Headquarters in Grunau.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know whether this report, and other information which might have been received from German agents operating in Russia, set the General Staff at that time upon a course of exploiting the possibilities inherent in a considerable number of German prisoners in Russia.

It seems that the German General Staff followed a dual policy with regard to its soldiers imprisoned in Russia. On the one hand, Germany badly needed her men to be repatriated from Russia as soon as possible—about 140,000 men were held in Russia in September 1917—in order to augment her manpower on the Western Front.⁷⁶ On the other hand, however, it might have been equally advantageous for the German General Staff to have a fraction of these men remaining in Russia and co-operating with the Bolsheviks to stiffen their military posture in order to checkmate the Allied offers of assistance.

The co-operation of the German Government with the Bolsheviks after the Brest Treaty, when Germany had a paramount interest in keeping the Soviet Government aloft, did not seem to be limited only to financial and economic matters. Lockhart reported on, or before, April 29, 1918 that Germany was offering also instructors for the Red Army to the Bolsheviks:

"Germans tell Chicherin, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, they continue advance because they are convinced of secret agreement between the Allies and the Bolsheviks. They say if Entente broken, they will cease advance and threatening moves and made a new agreement with the Bolsheviks on more favourable terms. Also offer instructors for the Red Army . . . German influence here growing. Mirbach says Germany stands ready to help Russia actively and immediately . . ."

It is probable that the offer was accepted, and that the German-Bolshevik military co-operation was effected through the German Repatriation Commission. Major Riggs in his report on the *Enemy Prisoners of War in Russia*, dated July 9, 1918, reports that on May 29 the German Repatriation Commissions had been dispatched to Perm, Yekaterinburg, Tomsk, Omsk, and Irkutsk, and that the arrival of the Commissions in Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg and Perm coincided with the increase in the enlistment of prisoners of war into the Red Army.

It is quite possible that the German-Bolshevik military co-operation stretched back to the pre-Brest Litovsk days because as Riggs further reported, "most, at any rate many, officers were sent out by secret agents long before the Brest Treaty. All Generals have gone."⁷⁸ True, these officers and generals could have been spirited out of the country; but perhaps the Bolsheviks made a good bargain with the German General Staff by assisting in this matter.

This whole question of the German-Bolshevik military co-operation is wide open to further research, and from material so far available no definite conclusions can be drawn. It seems that Kennan is not entirely correct in stating that "by no stretch of the imagination could the recruitment of these men (prisoners of war, *Ed.*) into the Red Guard be considered an expression of the wartime policies of the Central Powers or a move taken in their interest".⁷⁹ And further, that "there is no evidence that the German or Austrian governments had anything to do with the arming of the prisoners, or that the latter were used to promote the purposes of the Central Powers in any way".⁸⁰

Perhaps Kennan is right with regard to the period until

the beginning of March, the Brest-Litovsk peace. But in April the whole situation with the prisoners radically changed, and volunteering for the Red Army considerably shot up during that month. It is possible that this increase was due to the fact that the volunteers were mostly convinced Internationalists, and that only a few volunteers had been instructed to join. But until further evidence, the possibility of a German-Bolshevik understanding in this matter cannot altogether be excluded. After the Czechs and the Bolsheviks crossed arms, a military co-operation between the German General Staff and the Soviet Government is a proven fact, as will be seen soon.

This dual policy of the German General Staff towards its soldiers held in Russia enabled it to pursue the repatriation campaign on the one hand, and yet to co-operate with the Bolsheviks in strengthening their armed forces on the other. This would explain the apparent inconsistency between the sharp protest from Berlin on April 19, 1918 against the agitation amongst prisoners and Mirbach's offers of instructors for the Red Army, and of other "active and immediate assistance", confined to Lockhart by Chicherin and cabled by Riggs to Ruggles on April 29.

This dual policy seemed to confuse even an astute observer as Major Drysdale, who reported on April 10:

"It is interesting to note that at Chita there was a meeting of the German and Austria-Hungarian prisoners and soldiers, at which meeting the Officers protested against any of the prisoners of war joining the Red Guards. These Officers agreed to list all prisoners who joined the Red Guards, or had Bolshevik sympathies, and stated that the men so listed would be removed from the trains at the border of Germany and Austria and not permitted to return to their homes. These Officers even went so far as to threaten to shoot the prisoners of war who had joined the Red Guards. This fact seems to be of interest in that it implies motive for the prisoners joining the Red Guards, and tends to disprove the theory that German Agents or German Officers are encouraging the prisoners to be armed for any purpose."⁶¹

It is extremely difficult to say how many German prisoners

in Russia and Siberia out of the total of 140,000 joined the Internationalists. It seems that in European Russia and West Siberia the units of Internationalists were composed mainly, perhaps 70-80 per cent, of Hungarians, the rest of Austrians and Germans. It seems that in Omsk the Battalions of Internationalists were composed 90 per cent of Hungarians. In Irkutsk the situation was just reversed. There was a much higher concentration of German prisoners in Irkutsk, and in the whole Central Siberia and, as Yakovlev reported, in Irkutsk itself about 70 per cent of one "division" of Internationalists under formation there consisted of German nationals.⁸ A similar situation prevailed also in the Amur basin and the Maritime District.

An important question of why so many prisoners joined the Bolsheviks is discussed by Paul Anderson, Chief of American YMCA in Russia, in his report of May 18, 19 18. He feels that the monetary reasons, and other advantages offered by the Bolsheviks, accounted perhaps for majority of volunteers. This, however, was not entirely true, as we have seen.⁹

Several thousands of German nationals in the armed forces of the Soviet Government could have been an important asset in keeping the Bolsheviks in power, and in neutralising the pro-Allied and anti-Bolshevik opposition. All diplomatic efforts of the German Minister in Moscow, Count Mirbach, had frankly been directed to the task of maintaining the Bolsheviks in control of the Russian scene. Mirbach reported on May 13:

"... as I see it from here, ... our interests still demand the continuation in power of the Bolshevik Government ... If they do fall, then all their successors will, with the aid of the Entente, work for reunification with the ceded territories, especially with the Ukraine, and for the revision of the Brest peace treaty ... As far as I can see from here, it would best serve our interests to continue to provide the Bolsheviks with a minimum of essential goods and to maintain them in power ... They are now all of a sudden much more co-operative again in economic affairs, and at least some preparations can be made for future economic penetration."¹⁰

The tremendous strategic advantages Germany could derive

from several hundred of her men located in commanding positions within the Soviet military forces, and from several thousand of prisoners serving within their ranks, surely dwarfed any contribution these men could have made to the German cause on the Western Front.⁸⁵

These German operators within the Red Army could have kept the Russian colossus lay prostrate, relieving the German Command of the necessity of maintaining a large and idle force on its eastern flank. If the Bolsheviks were deposed and the Allies reopened the Eastern Front, Germany would be plunged again into a two-front war, and a substantial part of those 70 divisions withdrawn from Russia after the armistice, would have to be shifted back to the east.⁸⁶ True, the European Allies lacked resources for such an operation, but Japan and the United States could have checkmated Germany on her eastern flank.

The German General Staff was well aware of this fact and had its hand in a project of dynamiting about 40 tunnels on the Trans-Siberian line around Lake Baikal, to be blown up should the Japanese, or the Allies, attempt to move from Vladivostok along the Trans-Siberian line into Eastern and Central Siberia.⁸⁷ Both the German General Staff and the Bolshevik leadership were eminently interested in averting the reopening of the Eastern Front in Russia and, because the Trans-Siberian line was the only way through which the Allies could reach Western Russia to establish contact with the armies of the Central Powers, there is every reason to believe that the undermining of the tunnels was their joint project.⁸⁸ One of the Czech Commanders, Captain R. Gajda, in course of his operations against the Bolsheviks in Siberia after the outbreak of the conflict, seized a German military expert, not a prisoner of war, who had been sent by Trotsky from Moscow with instructions to blow up the tunnels in order to prevent the men of the Vladivostok group of the Army Corps from coming to the rescue of their comrades operating west of Lake Baikal.⁸⁹ The Czechs were to be prevented from controlling the line.

In addition to speculations concerning the strategic advantages Germany could derive from a few hundred of operators highly placed in Bolshevik military hierarchy, and from several thousand of her nationals, prisoners of war, in the ranks of

Bolshevik armed forces, the Allied circles in Russia buzzed with speculations concerning a possibility of economic exploitation of rich resources of Siberia and of Turkestan by Germany. Alarming reports concerning the number of Internationalists in the Bolshevik forces, the concentration of armed prisoners, non-Internationalists, in key cities, and the work of German agents in those two regions led to a conclusion that if this trend continued unchecked Germany could accomplish a feat of peaceful economic, and perhaps military, conquest of Siberia and Turkestan.⁹⁰

Recommendations of Drysdale

Naturally, the Allied circles in Russia, as well as the Foreign Offices in the capitals, looked upon this development with the greatest concern, and to ascertain the facts and assess the danger which the Internationalists, and also other prisoners of war, posed for the Allied cause several special missions were dispatched to Siberia.

Earliest on the record was a mission sent by the British Government in January 1918; nothing is known about it and about the result of its investigations, except that it was led by Colonel J. Wedgwood.⁹¹ The greatest effort to ascertain the facts and evaluate whether the Internationalists, and other armed and unarmed prisoners, posed a danger to Allied interests in Russia was undertaken by the American Embassy in Peking upon instructions of Washington. This task was assigned to an experienced man, Major W.S. Drysdale, formerly stationed at the Philippines. Also the French investigated this problem, and the task was carried out by the French Military Mission in Peking through Colonel Pichon, who knew Siberia well, as mentioned earlier.

Major Drysdale left Chita for Irkutsk on January 18, 1918, and after making his way through Siberia reported on February 5 that "the prisoners of war now cared for and organized (by the Bolsheviks, *Ed.*) are not considered a serious menace to the Allied interests".⁹² At the same time he stated that should the Allies consider the intervention in Siberia necessary, the surest and quickest plan would be to send an Allied force to positions along the Siberian line, at least as far as Irkutsk. He was,

however, not prepared to advise that the conditions in Siberia at that time warranted an Allied intervention, or that the Allies would benefit by such an undertaking.

Sometime in middle of March, during his second trip, Drysdale reported from Chita that the prisoners in Eastern Siberia were not armed, but that some of them had been converted to Bolshevik ideas. He further stated that "we can rest assured that there is no armed organization of prisoners of war".⁹² A similar assessment of the situation was made by Drysdale in his two reports from Blagoverkhensk; one of March 19 and other of March 21, 1918.⁹³ Drysdale correctly assessed the situation prevailing in Eastern Siberia at that time, for the mobilization drive of the Soviet Government was to reach these parts only in April; it was mounted on April 5, a fact established by evidence cited earlier.

Drysdale then went to Irkutsk. His findings from Irkutsk, reported from Harbin on April 10, reflected an entirely different situation existing in Central Siberia. Drysdale now reported that he had quite reliable information to the effect that German Officers had been attempting to assemble in Irkutsk German prisoners from Eastern Siberia, preparatory to their repatriation to Germany. This move had been interpreted by some informants as an effort on the part of Berlin to mobilize German forces for active military operations near Irkutsk. Drysdale personally thought that such operations were possible in view of the fact that the armed prisoners in Irkutsk, who had joined the Red Guards, guarded weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment stored in the city. Drysdale further reported it was quite possible that some large bodies of prisoners could have been armed by German agents themselves, and that there were 23,000 prisoners in camps of the Irkutsk Military District and about 13,000 in camps of the Pri-Amur District. The City of Irkutsk had about 1,000 to 1,500 armed Internationalists. All these prisoners posed a possible menace to the Allies due to the inability of the Soviet Government to control them. Should the Soviet Government ultimately fail to assert its control over them, then these could easily be used by German agents for promotion of Berlin's interests in Siberia.

Drysdale further expressed a belief that the prospects of a German economic exploitation of supplies available in Western

Siberia, and the possibility of using prisoners for promotion of German political interests in that region, might induce the Allies to intervene in Siberia in order to preclude such a development. He said that according to the American Commercial Attache in Petrograd Huntington, the German agents had already been offering harvesting machines on terms of ten-week delivery in return for purchase of grain and other supplies. Particularly in Western Siberia their activities were quite pronounced, and Huntington believed that from that province Berlin would be able to obtain supplies in large quantity.⁹³

The policy recommendations of Drysdale on how to handle this seriously developing situation in Siberia were bold. He suggested that the Secretary of State should present the Soviet Government with a demand for an immediate disarmament of all armed prisoners and their internment in camps under proper safeguards. The refusal to comply would be followed by an armed intervention in Siberia. The willingness of the Soviet Government, but its inability to comply, could be used for obtaining a request from the Soviet authorities which would authorise American troops to enter Siberia in order to guard the prisoners. American Railway Instructors, under Stevens, could be used to control the Trans-Siberian line in order to guarantee that no supplies were diverted to Germany.⁹⁴

The conclusions arrived at by Drysdale, and his recommendations, were well founded. They originated at a meeting, held on March 28, 1918 in Irkutsk, of the American Consul at Irkutsk MacGowan, Major Drysdale, and Huntington, with the Chairman of the Irkutsk Soviet Commissar Yansen. The meeting was reported upon by MacGowan's cable addressed to the American Ambassador in Russia and the Secretary of State:

"On the 28th I sent a clerk to arrange an interview with Jansen to protest against encroachments upon the rights of the Singer Company by Jansen and Bolsheviki. Preferred to talk in my office. There were present Huntington, Major Drysdale from Peking. Began with the arming of prisoners of war. At first Jansen denied knowledge thereof, but when he saw that I knew, he openly admitted that the Hungarians mentioned in my 18, armed by the Bolsheviki to fight the Cossack Semenoff, as claimed. Justified this under the theory

of international class war, saying that 'these workmen willingly went against the supporters of bourgeoisie. I vigorously protested against Russia, an Ally of America, arming the enemies of America for any purpose whatsoever. Declared this against international law, and public morale, as forces so armed were a possible menace to America and American interests, especially as the Bolsheviks *admitted their inability to control such forces*. Jansen had just admitted Red Guards in Irkutsk numbered less 200 men. Jansen especially insisted on denial prisoners armed in Irkutsk, but kept silence after he heard facts which I have reported in this connection. Jansen hastily added that orders were issued today to restore guards at the prison camps. Further said, orders just issued send prisoners back to western Siberia from east. He added nothing when I said that stream was constantly flowing in the contrary direction. Regarding harassment of the Singer and the Harvester Companies I said American people are friends of Russia . . . Van of Czechoslovaks arrived Taiga near Tomsk. Fearing junction with Semenoff Jansen trying compel them return west via Arctic. MacGowan."⁹⁷

The Report No. 18, referred to by MacGowan, despatched by him on March 27 and in part read:

"Have just returned from the railway where I saw a train of box cars and first and fourth carriages calculated (to contain, *Ed.*) a 1,000 men, including kitchen, four trucks, loaded field carts (?). The occupants were exclusively Hungarians, Hungarian boots and caps, and Russian uniforms . . . Station Master expects many similar trains. . . Russian Officer who has been 20 years with the Singer Sewing Machine Co. at Krasnoyarsk came here last night said that prisoners threw their Officers into prison vans, and are coming eastward under arms in several trains" . . .⁹⁸

It is most probable that Drysdale arrived at the conclusion that the prisoners in Siberia were a menace to Allied interests, which he reported upon with a recommendation of an early intervention, at the meeting held in MacGowan's office in Irkutsk

on March 28. In fact, there is evidence to show that such a conclusion, and his further recommendations, were not his personal judgment but a collective decision of the meeting in which the Consul at Chita, Jenkins, later concurred. This collective judgment to the effect that the prisoners posed a definite threat to the Allies was based upon the admission of Chairman of the Irkutsk Soviet Yansen, who frankly declared that the Bolsheviks were unable to control the movement of armed prisoners. The recommendation suggested to Washington then logically followed. Drysdale was very particular about this collective estimate of the situation and recommendations reaching the Department of State, and requested Jenkins to transmit the following message to the American Ambassador at Peking. Jenkins cabled it from Chita on April 1:

"About 1,500 armed prisoners of war in Irkutsk District. Indication several times this number in Omsk, and Western Siberia. Bolshevik propaganda spreading rapidly among the prisoners. *Armed prisoners are a positive menace through inability of the Trotsky Government to control them.* Advice urging the Secretary State to demand of Trotsky disarming and placing under proper guard the prisoners of war. If Trotsky Government unwilling urge immediate entry of the Allied troops. If Trotsky unable and unwilling secure Trotsky's request for an entry of American troops to guard the prisoners of war, and American railway instructors to supervise Siberian railway. Entry of Japanese troops *decided* mistake. *American Consuls Chita and Irkutsk concur.* Signed Drysdale."⁹⁹

Washington, however, never received this urgent message, and its present text is cited from a copy found in the Military Intelligence files brought to Washington years later.

These facts deny the assertions to the effect that the American Officials in Siberia, in presenting the armed and unarmed prisoners to the Department of State as a possible menace to the Allies, had been victimized by rumours and hearsay skilfully planted by anti-Bolshevik elements in Siberia to elicit from the Allies the sending of expeditionary force to Russia, as Kennan alleges.

The report of Colonel Pichon gives, in a more elaborate way, the substance of findings reported by Drysdale. Pichon believed that if the existing trend continued Germany would be able to accomplish a peaceful economic and military conquest of Siberia. In a long report of April 4, 1918 he stated that according to a most recent information received from French officers in Siberia, German agents had succeeded in making a number of arrangements for purchase of supplies. And according to French military intelligence reports, the Germans had been organizing a military position at Selenga, south of Lake Baikal, for some time. In concluding his report Pichon also pleaded for an immediate Allied intervention; for political reasons it should be an inter-Allied venture and not purely a Japanese undertaking.¹⁰⁰

The conflicting reports current in Allied circles in Russia with regard to the number of armed prisoners in Siberia, and whether these really menaced their interests in that country, prompted the advocates of Allied-Bolshevik co-operation into sending a special fact-finding mission to Siberia. Trotsky denied that prisoners had been armed in any significant number and placed a special railway car at the disposal of Captain W.L. Hicks, a British officer, and Captain W.B. Webster, an American officer, who were to undertake the mission. These two men, accompanied by an appointee of the Soviet Government, selected Irkutsk as the centre of their inquiry. Arriving in Irkutsk on March 29 they inspected one camp and, though some armed prisoners were found there, the Bolsheviks assured these two Allied officers that the Soviets would not arm more than 1,500 prisoners in all Siberia. The Irkutsk Soviet even gave them a written guarantee to that effect. Strangely enough, Hicks and Webster were satisfied with this written assurance and reported to their respective Ambassadors stating that there were only 1,031 armed prisoners in all Siberia, mostly in Omsk, or fighting Semenov.¹⁰¹

The fact that these two officers found everything normal in Irkutsk, as stated in their final report, and that they took for granted the assurances of the Commissars of the Irkutsk Soviet, casts a cloud of suspicion upon their objectivity. Particularly Webster showed willingness to overlook some obvious hard facts unfavourable to the Bolsheviks. He even presented Drys-

dale, whom he met on March 29 in Irkutsk, with a seven-point memorandum explaining what advantages the Allies had been deriving from the fact that the Bolsheviks were in control of Russia.

Drysdale incorporated this memorandum into his report, written in Harbin on April 10, with the following comments:

"Captain Webster stated that our Embassy at Vologda was still working with Trotsky; that the Trotsky Government was again turning to the Allies for support and gave the following as reasons for supporting the present Bolshevik Administration in Russia. These ideas are evidently approved by the representatives of the U.S. Government . . .¹⁰²

The memorandum is an odd document, too obviously reflecting the ideas of Robins, the untiring prophet of Soviet-Allied *rapprochement*. Some of the phrases have a familiar ring, and sound as if drafted by Trotsky himself and then placed into the hands of Webster through Robins. The bias which Webster had for the Bolshevik cause makes the final report of these two observers a useless document. It sharply contrasts with the reports of Drysdale and Pichon on each individual points: with regard to the description of the general situation in Siberia, in estimating the number of armed prisoners in the Red forces, and assessing the actual and potential threat the organized and concentrated prisoners, non-Internationalists, posed for Allied interests in Russia. But the report was taken at its face value, particularly in Washington, and only a few people who knew better took exception.¹⁰³

Wilson Turns Down Requests for Intervention

It is not surprising that these conflicting reports upon so important an issue threw the three Allied Governments into a hot controversy over their reliability and, more important, into a deadlock over the policies to be followed. The French and the British Governments followed the assessments and recommendations made by Pichon, these were close to Drysdale's reports, while President Wilson considered Drysdale's reports as not sufficient to warrant a change of American policy

towards Russia of persistent opposition to sending any Allied troops into Russia.

Interestingly enough, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, acting upon the early reports of Drysdale, particularly upon reports from March and the beginning of April, took a contrary position to that assumed by the President.

Further evidence which strengthened Lansing's hand in advocating a change of American policy towards Russia were two cables delivered to the Department of State by the British Ambassador Lord Reading. One cable was from Peking, dated March 18, and reported the main conclusions Colonel Pichon had arrived at after his Siberian trip. The second cable transmitted the information which the Acting British Vice-Consul in Irkutsk had received from the former Commander of the prisoners of war camps in Irkutsk, Yakovlev, already referred to.¹⁶⁴ As soon as Lansing received these two cables from Lord Reading on March 21 he sent them to President Wilson the very day.¹⁶⁵ The President replied on March 22 to the effect that he had read them with interest, but that he still did not find in them a sufficient cause for altering the American position with regard to the urge of the British and the French to send an Allied expedition into Russia:

"I am much obliged to you for sending those papers to me as promptly as possible, but I do not find in them sufficient cause for altering our position. They still do not answer the question I had put to Lord Reading and to all others who argue in favour of intervention by Japan, mainly, what is it to effect and how will it be efficacious in effecting it? The condition in Siberia furnishes no answer."¹⁶⁶

The Secretary of State was, however, of a different opinion and urged the President to reconsider. He drafted a long letter arguing in favour of intervention and on March 24 sent it to his chief :

"If the reports, which persist, that the military prisoners in Siberia are being organized under German Officers and have succeeded in occupying Irkutsk, are confirmed, we

shall have a new situation in Siberia which may cause a revision of our policy. It would seem to me, therefore, that we should consider the problem on the hypothesis that the reports are true, and be prepared to act with promptness . . . With the actual control by the Germans of so important a place as Irkutsk the question of the moral effect upon the Russian people of an expedition against the Germans is a very different thing from the occupation of the Siberian line in order to keep order between contesting Russian factions. It would seem to be a legitimate operation against the common enemy. I do not see how we could refuse to sanction such a military step . . ."¹⁰⁷

But President Wilson was adamant because Lansing's marginal note on the document states: "This was returned to me on 3/23/18 by the President who said that he quite agreed, but did not think the situation yet warranted change of policy."

This was a momentous and history-making decision, primarily responsible for the survival of the Soviet regime in Siberia, and in Russia, at the time of its greatest crisis; it killed all prospects for an early Allied intervention in Siberia which would have deprived the Bolsheviks of the support they were deriving from both armed and unarmed prisoners. There is very little doubt that without this support the Soviet regime would have collapsed both in Siberia and Russia. Leaving aside the Allied interests, whether the Internationalists and other prisoners were a menace to the Allied cause in Russia and whether they really occupied Irkutsk or not,¹⁰⁸ the mere fact that the Soviet Government made a deliberate and extensive use of enemy nationals in order to force its rule upon the Russian people should have been a sufficient reason for President Wilson, a constitutionalist to the bone, to agree to an intervention in Siberia. The fact of the situation was that the Bolsheviks did not represent the will of the Russian people.

Obviously, the President rejected Lansing's advice on moral grounds because he wished, as he often had said, to safeguard the sovereign rights of the Russian people.¹⁰⁹ But what President Wilson overlooked was the fact that in the moment when the Soviet Government reached for foreign nationals in order to maintain itself in power and to decimate the opposition,

the Bolsheviks forfeited the right to speak for the Russian people; their regime ceased to represent them regardless of whether the Internationalists had joined the Bolsheviks from conviction and whether they were or not under the control of German officers loyal to Berlin. This all was immaterial. The controlling element in the situation was the fact that foreign nationals had an enormous and far-reaching influence upon the Russian military and political scene, and that they prevented the free interplay of domestic forces to settle the question of who finally would rule Russia. This was the central point of the entire controversy over the significance of the Internationalists. It had a decisive bearing upon the question of whether to wait for an invitation to be extended by the Soviet Government for intervention, or whether to launch it without such an invitation.

This was the position taken by the Czechs who, because of this reasoning, were willing to work for the reopening of the Eastern Front even at the cost of fighting the Bolsheviks. They did not think that they would be initiating an intervention in internal affairs of Russia; for them the Russian internal conflict had already been internationalized by the Bolsheviks' initiative and their alliance with prisoners of war. Masaryk had been prepared to commit the Army Corps to operations aiming at the reopening of the Eastern Front and to fight the Bolsheviks in an all-out and declared war in January-March 1918, precisely because he considered the Constituent Assembly, dissolved by the Bolsheviks, the only authentic spokesman of the Russian people: the Bolsheviks were usurpers supported by Berlin.

Had not the British and the French presented the problem of intervention in purely strategic and military terms and merely in the light of the Allied interests, and had they argued also on constitutional grounds, then President Wilson, a Professor of Political Science and a great humanist, would have perhaps acted differently. This would have meant a world of difference. But both these issues were hopelessly confused. The *raison d'être* of the British and the French plan for intervention should have been, perhaps, broadened and reinforced by constitutional considerations: that the intervention would not only achieve certain strategic and military objectives beneficial to the Allies but primarily that it would benefit the Russian people by

removing the hold of enemy nationals over them, and by giving them an opportunity to re-install the Constituent Assembly. As a strongest argument for intervention Wilson's own doctrine of self-determination should have, perhaps, been invoked: the Bolsheviks, and their mercenaries, did not represent the Russian people and, in fact, prevented them from freely deciding their own fate. Interestingly enough, the plan of the Allied intervention in Russia, a document prepared by the British General Staff in April 1918, and referred to earlier (Document No. 1) avoided any reference to political implications and to the question of what would happen with the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks, and the Soviet Government, were not even mentioned. The whole issue was treated in purely military terms.

On balance then, this historic decision of March 23, in view of the evidence cited here, was controlled by the fact that at the time it was made by President Wilson there were not enough hard facts on hand, and that the available evidence on the number of prisoners with the Bolsheviks, and on the extent of Soviet Government's reliance upon these to maintain itself in power, was conflicting. However, prudence called for an action based upon Lansing's hypothesis that Drysdale's reports were essentially correct. As will be seen, Lansing's judgment in this matter was fully vindicated.

In the meantime, the Department of State began to receive further reports widely disagreeing with Drysdale's evaluations and recommendations with regard to the situation in Siberia. The American Ambassador in Peking, P.S. Reinsch, wired to the Department of State on April 6 that Washington's negative position regarding the intervention was correct, and that the reports from Siberia were overstated.¹¹⁰

The most important role in distorting the reports and conclusions of Drysdale, and in creating confusion in Washington with regard to the assessment of the prisoners of war situation in Siberia, seems to fall upon Reinsch.

In the first place are some doubts whether Reinsch ever transmitted to the Department of State Drysdale's finding, in which Consuls MacGowan and Jenkins had concurred, to the effect that the armed prisoners posed a definite menace to Allied interests in Russia because the Soviet Government, as had been admitted by the Chairman of the Irkutsk Soviet, failed to con-

trol them. It will be recalled that the three American officials further suggested to the Secretary of State to demand from Trotsky an immediate disarmament of these prisoners and their internment in properly guarded camps, and further, should Trotsky be unwilling or unable to comply the Allies should then enter Siberia with their troops. It will be further recalled that Jenkins transmitted this joint opinion from Chita to Reinsch in Peking on April 1 for transmission to Washington. But the search in the files of the Department of State in the *National Archives* failed to produce a copy of this important communication. There is no reason to believe that Reinsch himself did not receive it from Jenkins; the telegraphic line between Chita and Peking functioned well at that time. In fact, Reinsch knew about the meeting and referred to it in his cable to Washington on April 2, 1918.¹¹¹ But no recommendations from this meeting were forwarded.

The most probable explanation of why this joint recommendation was not received in Washington is that Reinsch did not forward it. First, it was addressed to him, and not to the Department of State. Second, it *only advised* Reinsch to *urge* the Secretary of State to demand from Trotsky the disarmament of prisoners and their internment. Thus it was left to Reinsch's judgment to decide whether to make such a suggestion to Washington or not. Obviously, Reinsch saw the situation in Siberia differently and in his capacity of the Chief of Peking Mission would not support a policy suggested by Drysdale and his colleagues. It seems that their recommendation simply was overruled by him and withheld from Washington.

Instead, prejudiced as he was against any Allied military action in Siberia, Reinsch began to feed the Department of State with reports which reflected his own opinion of the Siberian situation rather than the facts found on the spot by Drysdale and his colleagues. He even made a deliberate attempt to underplay Drysdale's findings and recommendations which had previously been despatched to the Department of State. On April 10 Reinsch cabled to Washington:

"Reference to my cable of April 8th 1918. The American policy of holding back in the matter of intervention in Siberia is justified by recent reports from there, particularly British

Military Attache, and Major Fitzwilliams, British Army. The following is the summary of the situation as it appears from *here*:

There is no evidence of concerted plan on the part of the Germans to control Siberia through the prisoners, nor could such an attempt succeed. *Earlier reports about armed prisoners were exaggerated: most of these reports came from one source in Irkutsk . . .*

It is believed that the Allies, particularly the United States, still have it in their power to take action which would keep up spirit of other Slavic nationalities in Europe; economic rather than military action will now accomplish this. Russian population needs clothes and manufactured goods; workmen need food held by peasants. The immediate creation of a Russian Trading Corporation . . . which would import needed goods from the United States and Japan . . . all through the local Russian and Siberian committees (the Soviets, *Ed.*) . . . on condition that order be first restored . . . this policy if announced to people will gain their immediate adhesion . . .

If policy of economic support to Siberia (Bolshevik, *Ed.*) and restoration of traffic is put in the foreground, it is believed that *other matters will take care of themselves*. Should intervention come first, there is danger that it will be understood to be *in favour of reaction and capitalism*, and will alienate the people permanently . . . "112

We do not know what "recent reports from there" Reinsch had on hand, perhaps the report of Hicks and Webster and what Major Fitzwilliams reported, but it seems that in emphasizing that he was submitting a "summary of the situation as it appears from here", i.e., Peking, his judgment was coloured more by extraneous considerations obtaining in Peking than by the actual facts of the Siberian situation. His reference to reactionary elements and capitalism seems to underscore this assumption. In this context his statement to the effect that the earlier reports about the armed prisoners had been exaggerated and that they mostly came from one source in Irkutsk appears to be a deliberate attempt to play down Drysdale's findings and recommendations in order to pave the way for his own solution

of the Siberian situation. Reinsch could have hardly had a more authoritative report on the situation than the joint recommendation of the two American Consuls and Drysdale, which was based upon their conference with the Chairman of the Irkutsk Soviet held on March 28, 1918.

In this connection it is not correct to state that in giving his own reading of the Siberian situation to the Department of State on April 10 Reinsch based his cable of that day upon the "disparity between existing facts and analysis of future prospects", allegedly evident in Drysdale's report on Siberia of April 10, 1918.¹¹³ The fact is that Drysdale was still writing his eight-page report on that day in far off Harbin; the report could not possibly have reached Reinsch in Peking at the time of sending his cable on April 10, 1918.

Explanation of Reinsch's attitude to Drysdale's findings and to the Siberian situation, and his reporting to Washington, must be sought elsewhere. It seems that Reinsch at this stage suffered from a "progressive bias", as many other well meaning people at that time understandably did and favoured co-operation of the Allies with the Bolsheviki. Reinsch had reported to Washington two days earlier, on April 8, 1918:

"Russian Minister to Peking and Russian Ambassador at Tokyo are imperialists in sentiment, opposed to democratic movement in Russia."¹¹⁴

The democratic movement meaning the Bolsheviki, most probably.

It was unfortunate that the message of Drysdale, MacGowan and Jenkins failed to reach Washington for it would have provided an additional ammunition for Lansing in pressing the President into revising his stand with regard to the Anglo-French plans of sending an Allied expeditionary force to Siberia and Russia. Lansing would have, probably, argued that the message confirmed the correctness of his hypothesis, which had been expressed, as will be recalled, in his letter to the President on March 24. Whether the President would have considered this message as a "sufficient cause for altering our position", as he had said to Lansing on March 22, is difficult to say. Probably not, for reasons discussed later.

But one thing is most probable. Were the message of Drysdale and of his two American colleagues received in Washington it would have set the American policy towards Russia upon a more realistic course as Lansing was at that time searching for facts upon which to base his policy. In this search he cabled to the American Ambassador in Vologda on April 10:

"Department has reports from Summers, also from Major Drysdale, Military Attache, who was sent to Irkutsk, showing conclusively that prisoners of war are arming and getting beyond control Please ascertain informally and report to Department what action is proposed to control the present movement, which is gradually assuming serious proportions."¹¹⁵

Two days later Lansing cabled directly to Reinsch a set of facts showing that the Secretary of State at that time did not accept Reinsch's judgment on the Siberian situation. His cable dated April 12, ran as follows:

"Please verify following reports received from reliable source:

(4) German Major General, 2 Colonels, and 34 Officers, arrived at Irkutsk to organize large concentration of armed prisoners of war there.

(5) Preparations are being made for destruction of bridges, and arches, in case of Allied intervention.

(6) Prisoners of war trying to return to Europe have been stopped at Omsk and sent back . . ."¹¹⁶

This cable caught up with Reinsch. He cabled back on April 25 that the information, with some modifications, "seemed correct".¹¹⁷

It will be recalled that earlier, on April 2, Ambassador Francis had cabled to Washington the substance of the findings of Webster and Hicks in Irkutsk.¹¹⁸ As soon as the Ambassador received the telegram from the Consuls, he immediately drew Lansing's attention to the disparity between the figures given by Webster and those evident in the Consular telegrams. On April 18 he cabled:

"... following just received from Webster, Omsk, through Robins:

'Leaving 18th for Moscow. Investigations Krasnoyarsk, Omsk, give entirely satisfactory results confirming impressions communicated previous telegrams. No armed prisoners Krasnoyarsk, discipline strict. Omsk chief centre arming prisoners, total, including those sent against Semenov, 1,100. Omsk provincial arming, prisoners confirmed. Guarantee obtained from all Siberian Soviets. All armed prisoners violently socialistic. Present conditions without menace except against Central Empires and Japanese invasion'."

Francis then made the following comments:

"Mail just received from Consul General enclosing telegrams from MacGowan, Jenkins, Thomson, Nielsen. Do not accord with Webster. MacGowan reported 12th, had urged Webster visit Omsk, but said Webster party likewise disposed in this as in other matters to accept Bolshevik assurances that it was nothing. Thomson, Omsk, April 5th, reported 1,000 prisoners near there fully equipped under German Officers and suggested that arming prisoners might be with German approval to oppose Japanese invasion. Jenkins, Chita, 15th, reports decree of local Soviet Government declaring prisoners free as their nationals. You see reports disagree. Robins already cabled Davison, Thomson, that Webster investigation 'admirably done'."¹¹⁹

It must have been a confusing picture in Washington when all these conflicting reports about the number and significance of armed and unarmed prisoners reached there. And now even Lansing, bewildered by the widely conflicting reports, reversed himself and began to consider Drysdale's reports and evaluations exaggerated.

Interestingly enough, even Drysdale reversed himself with regard to the assessment of the situation in Siberia in his last report, written in Peking on April 24, 1918. Wrote Drysdale:

"It seems far fetched to consider the prisoners of war a real military menace in view of the fact that it is clearly indicated that they are acting defensibly and at most are prepared to support the cause of labour against any reaction-

ary force. At present it seems clear that the armed prisoners cannot be considered as military force controlled by Germany or Austria or even that the arming of prisoners was due to German or Austrian influence . . .

I personally feel that the attempt at a peaceful penetration of Siberia is a reasonable, sound and conservative policy, will have excellent chance of success in restoring order in Siberia and possibly in Russia and certainly in winning the confidence of the Siberian and Russian people and in preventing the present Administration from giving active co-operation to the Germans.

I am convinced that if the Soviet Administration were made to realize that the Allies were not unfriendly but were willing to aid the present Administration in Siberia, provided that Administration could restore order, that the result would be beneficial to the Allies and may even result in bringing Russia back into the war.

The present administration in Siberia is undoubtedly very much stronger than it was in January and it may be further strengthened by giving it responsibility and the assurance of our friendship . . .

*It strikes me that the present Soviet committees in Siberia could easily be induced to request the entry of these instructors (American railway instructors under Stevens, Ed), especially, if the Bolsheviks were made to realise that the Allies were not unfriendly to their cause but demanded the restoration of order and the prevention of the spread of German influence only . . ."*¹¹⁶

An important question is why Drysdale reversed himself. It will be recalled that only two weeks before, on April 10, Drysdale had written in Harbin an eight-page report in which he came to quite different conclusions. He reported that the prisoners had been armed in large numbers, that they posed a definite danger to Allied interests in Russia, and he even recommended that the Secretary of State should demand from Trotsky their immediate disarmament and internment. Failing this, Allied troops should enter Siberia. He further said that though the position of the Soviet Government in Siberia much improved since January, its strength had already passed the

zenith and was rapidly declining. He felt that the Bolsheviks had lost all popular support and that the peasants, and even workers, would support any other government which could better administer the country.¹²¹

Surely, it is hardly probable that this situation could have changed in Siberia in the intervening time between April 10 and April 24 as to invalidate his previous findings and conclusions. It is also unlikely that Drysdale came across some new facts which would make him to overrule his own findings and recommendations.

The most probable explanation of why Drysdale now reversed himself is the fact that he wrote his last report of April 24 in Peking under the eye of Reinsch. It is certain that Reinsch and Drysdale discussed the Siberian situation at length, and that when Drysdale sat down to write his military judgment was probably overshadowed by purely political considerations which he carried away from his conversations with Reinsch.

In the first place, he gave up his idea of an Allied military intervention in Siberia and suggested that a peaceful penetration of Siberia should be the policy to follow. It will be recalled that this was Reinsch's idea, which he had suggested to Washington on April 8. Second, this last Drysdale's report exhibited political consideration of progressive bias, unknown in his previous reports. Wrote Drysdale:

"... Viewed from a local viewpoint it seems reasonable to aid any faction able to restore order along the railway, but in reality it will be giving assistance to a faction opposing the *de facto* government of Russia and Siberia. The question involved is one of recognising the importance of socialist ideas and the ideas of labourers not only in Russia and Siberia but even throughout the world, and that to antagonize the *de facto* government of Russia and possibly of labour operations throughout the world . . ." ¹²²

An important light upon the question of whether Reinsch attempted to withhold Drysdale's reports and recommendations from Washington seems to be thrown by the fact that he did not dispatch Drysdale's reports of March 19 and April

10 until April 24, when he lumped these two reports with the one written by Drysdale on the same day for dispatch to Washington. But to make sure that the Department of State would disregard the first two reports and consider only the last one, Reinsch attached to this shipment a letter to that effect. Reinsch reported that "Major Drysdale is averse to military intervention", because he thought that the Allied interests there could be safeguarded through a peaceful penetration. Drysdale believed, said Reinsch "that the forces of democratic development in Russia (the consolidation of the Bolshevik power, *Ed*) cannot be permanently obstructed."¹²³

Interestingly enough, Reinsch was one of the first to reverse his stand under the impact of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict when the true state of affairs emerged about the armed and unarmed prisoners of war in Siberia. In fact, he was first to advocate that the Czechs be left in Siberia to fight the prisoners in order to prevent Germany from seizing that region. As his previous reporting, underplaying the significance of the prisoners in Siberia, so his reporting during June and July and now overplaying their importance, significantly affected the course of American policy towards Russia.

The wide disparity between the assessment of the Siberian situation and the policy recommendations of Drysdale, Summers and of others on the one hand, and of Webster and Hicks on the other but, above all, the way Reinsch handled Drysdale's reports—it must be remembered that Drysdale's home base was Peking and that most of his communications with Washington passed through Reinsch's hands, who was the chief of the Peking Mission—had a profound effect upon the course of American policy not only towards the immediate problem of Siberia but the Russian question in general. It set the development of American policy towards the Russian question upon a course of wait and see, of inactivity and drift, with the result that Washington ceased to understand what was going on in Siberia and Russia and failed to provide leadership when it was most expected by the Allies and the Russian people.

It was not until the Czechs began to fight with the Bolsheviks at the end of May that Washington became again alive to the existence of the Siberian and Russian questions, and that an attempt was made to search for a policy in order to catch up

with the rapidly moving events. Even then it was a half-hearted attempt and it failed soon, bringing about an ignominious disaster to all involved; only the Bolsheviks profited. The American policy towards Russia never recovered from the failure to appreciate and act upon Drysdale's reports concerning the prisoners in Siberia. By withdrawing from the Russian scene Washington lost a live contact and interaction with the events which shaped destiny of Siberia and Russia in the spring and summer months of 1918.

The Czech-Bolshevik conflict in May brought Washington back to the point where it had ceased to have an active policy on the Russian question in March and April due to the confused image created by the conflicting reports on the numbers, role and potentiality of the armed and unarmed enemy prisoners in Siberia. The Czech-Bolshevik conflict resolved the issue which had been immobilizing American policy towards Russia since the end of March by forcefully bringing home the point that the real power behind the Bolsheviks, for all that time, were the armed prisoners of war. It was only on June 28 that Washington realized that Drysdale had been right all the way through. On that day Lansing forwarded to President Wilson the text of a cable which had been sent by Admiral Knight from Vladivostok on June 26. The cable stated that the Bolshevik forces fighting the Czechs around Lake Baikal, in the Amur basin and the Maritime Province were composed mostly of armed prisoners of war.¹²⁴ Knight's cable was an eye-opener in Washington, and Lansing appended to this cable the following note:

"The Admiral Knight's report seems to present with some definiteness the question of the Czech-Slovak operations against German and Austrian prisoners of war in Siberia and the attitude of this Government and the Allies. I have not been inclined to attach weight to Major Drysdale's conclusions in the past, but this matter which the Admiral reports, his views are endorsed by Mr. Langdon Warner who is conservative and sound, and whom I regard as a reliable observer . . ."¹²⁵

Thus Drysdale's assessment of the situation in Siberia was.

vindicated at last. But it took plenty of blood of Czech soldiers to drive home the point that the prisoners in Russia, the Internationalists and the armed non-Internationalists were really numerous and that they posed a real threat to Allied interest in that country. Besides, it must be noted that at the time when the crucial decision of not sending an Allied expedition into Russia was taken in Washington, the Bolshevik regime had long before forfeited the right to speak for the Russian people because it rested upon bayonets of foreign mercenaries.

Drysdale's reports describing the situation in Siberia in early months of 1918 proved correct, and his assessment of opportunities and potentialities inherent in it realistic and sober. As he put it, if Germany wished, she could have derived great strategic and economic advantages from the hold her nationals wielded over Siberia and Russia. And she did, but it were the strategic advantages rather than the economic benefits which she derived from her men in Russia. These men kept the Soviet regime in power, committed to Germany and out of reach of the Allies. Germany's eastern flank was safe, and all her manpower concentrated on the Western Front ready to mount the spring offensive on the Marne.

The Czechoslovak-Bolshevik-German Triangle

Though the question of exactly how the German General Staff planned to exploit its men captive in Russia must remain unanswered until further evidence, some light upon this problem is thrown by a telegram dated May 8, 1918, from Berckheim, the Liaison Officer of German Headquarters, to the Foreign Ministry, and showing that the General Staff was prepared to intervene in Russian internal policies if the situation warranted such a move. Berckheim reported that General Ludendorff would be grateful for information about Count Mirbach's reports concerning the internal political situation in Russia. The General was of the opinion that a government hostile to Germany might take over the helm of affairs in Russia, that he considered it advisable to prepare for this possibility, and that this should be precluded by extending assistance to circles acceptable to Germany who could take over the government.¹²⁴

The telegram does not specify what kind of assistance the

General Staff wished to extend to Russian circles friendly to Germany, but it seems probable that it was a military assistance, and that perhaps the prisoners could have been assigned a key role in it. The telegram suggests that Germany was preparing an anti-Bolshevik *coup*, the success of which in the final analysis would depend upon the attitude of the armed forces supporting the Bolsheviks. The percentual ratio between the Bolsheviks and the prisoners within the Soviet armed forces in May 1918, and the concentration of freely moving prisoners to larger cities, created a situation highly conducive to a quick deposition of the Soviet rule in most parts of Russia and certainly in all Siberia. In fact, as will presently be seen, Francis cabled to Washington on June 19 that a German Colonel had offered to an anti-Bolshevik group 10,000 German troops and an unknown number of organized German prisoners to overthrow the Bolshevik regime.

The plans of the German General Staff concerning an anti-Bolshevik *coup* in Russia must have reached a stage of concrete preparations in second half of May,¹²⁷ for the Soviet Government became keenly aware of the danger and turned to the Czechs for assistance. On May 23 Vice-Chairman of Cheliabinsk Soviet, Commissar Kobelianko, with another Commissar, rushed into a meeting of the National Council requesting an immediate and confidential consultation with two Czech leaders Pavlu and Richter. The request was granted, and the astounded Czechs learnt that the Cheliabinsk Soviet had just received a highly confidential telegram of instructions from Moscow concerning the danger which the prisoners posed for the Soviet Government. The telegram pointed out that the Germans and the Hungarians in the Soviet armed forces were mostly rabid nationalists loyal to their governments, and that they exploited the trust which had been placed in them by the Bolsheviks in order to penetrate the defence establishments of the Soviet Government. At the present time these foreign nationalists constituted majority of the Bolshevik armed forces, said the telegram, and their officers controlled the key commanding posts. The government had reliable information that these men were preparing to execute a political *coup* in all Siberia in order to seize the control of the Trans-Siberian line. The Government ordered the local Soviets to dismiss all prisoners of war from

their Executive Committees, from all important commanding posts in the army and closely watch their movement. The commissars requested the Czechs to throw their support behind the Soviet Government in case of such an uprising. For the time being the commissars would appreciate if the Czechs, because the Bolsheviks did not understand German and Hungarian languages, would take charge of intelligence work among prisoners. The Czechs promptly promised assistance, but the record does not show any further details on this important episode.¹²⁸

For the Czechs, obviously, the Bolsheviks in control of Russia, even after all that had happened between the Czechs and the Soviet Government, were preferable to any puppet government ruling directly Russia on behalf of Germany. But the Czechs were left with a bitter taste in their mouth, for their units were for some time encircled by armed Internationalists dispatched against them by the Bolsheviks.¹²⁹

It is not known what the commissars from Cheliabinsk reported to Moscow about their conference with the Czech leaders and how this affected the Soviet leaders who, at that time, were in the midst of planning an annihilation campaign against the Czechs. The fact is, as later will be seen, that on the very day, May 23, Director of the Operational Department of Commissariat of War, A.A. Aralov, ordered the local Soviets to disarm and dissolve all Czech units and incorporate their men into the Red Army under the penalty of military operations to enforce this order. Aralov's order, coupled with other factors, precipitated the conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks on May 25, during which the Soviet Government made a common cause with the Internationalists against the Czechs.

Whether the Soviet leaders thought that they could use first the Internationalists in order to force the Czechs into submission and then, in a sudden reverse, use the Czechs, now in the ranks of the Red Army, in order to break the hold which the Internationalists had over the Soviet military forces, must remain a matter of speculation. If it really were so, then the scheme was a fantastic combination which looked well on paper; obviously it was based upon exploitation of natural animosities between the Czechs and the Internationalists. The scheme, however, backfired; the Czechs refused to disarm and the Bolsheviks

then had to plunge into the struggle to subdue the Czechs with the assistance of the Internationalists.

However it might have been, the fact is that the Czech-Bolshevik conflict played directly into the hands of the German General Staff because it eliminated the need for instigating a pro-German *coup* in Russia; Germany now became the natural ally of the Bolsheviks who began to lean upon Berlin for military and other assistance against the Czechs. An entry in the Diary of the German Military Attache in Moscow recorded under 23 June 1918 that "a suggestion was secretly made to us to agree to arming our prisoners of war in Siberia and European Russia, and to their deployment against the Czechoslovaks."¹⁰⁰

Exactly what arrangements were arrived at then by the two governments is not certain. But as is highly probable that the earlier mentioned rapid increase of prisoners in the ranks of the Red Army during June-July had something to do with the German-Soviet co-operation in this matter. It must have been a matter of great importance for the German General Staff to prevent the Czechs from defeating the Bolsheviks. The thesis circulated by the Bolsheviks, that the Czech uprising had been instigated by the Allies in order to depose the Soviet regime preliminary to a massive Allied intervention in Russia to reopen the Eastern Front, must have found a very receptive ear with Mirbach and Berlin.

A more concrete evidence relating to the German-Soviet co-operation against the Czechs can be gathered from a valuable Report on the German Activity in Russia prepared by Captain Eugene Prince from the American Military Mission in Moscow on 28 June 1918, and sent to Colonel J.A. Ruggles, Chief of the Mission in Vologda. Prince reported that more than 14 days before he had received a reliable information to the effect that 5 trainloads of Germans, clad in Russian uniforms, had passed from Vologda on the Nikolai line to Rybinsk; another train had been retained in Vologda. About the same time one trainload of Germans, consisting of 5 cars with troops, 12 sealed cars with freight, and 7 three-inch guns, had been transferred to the Kazan railway and probably sent to the Czech front. A German General Staff Officer, Meidel, had been visiting Trotsky repeatedly and on each occasion remained with him for a very long time; during one such visit maps of

the internal front were called for by Trotsky. Since then it was reported that Meidel visited the Czech front. Numerous German officers were seen in Moscow in civilian dress, but their military bearing gave them away. Intelligence reports state, writes Prince, that about 80 German instructors had gone over to the Czech front during the previous week. Recently, the Germans were able to secure from the Soviet Government several houses in Moscow, and reliable sources reported that they had a considerable stock of arms in these houses and a large number of troops hiding there. It was estimated that in Moscow alone the German General Staff had about 8,000 men, about 6,000 rifles, a large number of hand grenades and bombs, and several pieces of artillery. Prince further reported upon other German activities in Russia and the possibility of a German coup,²²¹ obviously referring to the situation obtaining before the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict. But much had changed since, and there was no real chance for such a coup because the Germans and the Bolsheviks were now allies.

Summarising, it could be said that the evidence so far cited here shows that Russia in the spring months of 1918—it must be emphasized that we have been concerned only with a period prior to the Czech-Bolshevik conflict—was pregnant with opportunities for both the Germans and the Allies to advance their objectives in that country. They all centred around the possibility of exploiting the prisoners of war, either the Internationalists, or ordinary prisoners concentrated in all larger cities of Siberia and Russia. Berlin with their assistance could have instigated a pro-German coup, while the Allies could have launched operations in Siberia and, eventually in Russia, in order to suppress Berlin's interference in the internal affairs of the country. This would have, probably, led to the deposition of the Bolshevik regime and the reopening of the Eastern Front.

Why these possibilities were not seized either by the Allies, or by Germany, is another matter, well beyond the scope of this study. Our task is to ascertain whether the reports of Drysdale, Pichon, Ruggles, Riggs, Prince, and other observers, reporting upon these possibilities, were justified and whether their judgment in assessing them was sound.

The later developments fully vindicated the reports of these men, and one wonders whether President Wilson did not

commit a mistake in not acting upon a hypothesis that these reports were correct and as had been suggested by Lansing. Assertions to the effect that the significance of prisoners of war in Russia and Siberia was deliberately overstated by the advocates of an Allied expedition into Russia, in order to have an additional inducement for President Wilson to make him agree to the venture and to make their cause more plausible, overlook the evidence cited in this chapter.

However, this is Kennan's assertion. Kennan gives a detailed account of the role these reports played in the attempts of the Allies to pressurize President Wilson into agreeing to sending an Allied expedition to Russia.¹³²

This contention seems to be holding good only until the end of March, before the Bolshevik work among the prisoners of war began to gather momentum. But during April and, particularly as a consequence of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict, the situation regarding the prisoners fundamentally changed. But it must be said at once that before the end of March, and even later, there was no real danger of Germany seizing the whole of Siberia through the instrumentality of the prisoners. Whatever plans the German General Staff might have had with its nationals in Russia, a seizure of Siberia was a remote possibility; probably, it was not even planned. But at the same time it must be emphasized that the prisoners in Russia and Siberia seriously endangered the Allied interests in that country. Without their support the Bolshevik regime would have fallen, and a regime favourable to the Allies might have been installed in power. This regime, probably, would have invited the Allies to reopen the Eastern Front in Russia.

These two issues were hopelessly confused. The maximum and mostly imaginary threat to the Allied interests, the seizure of the whole Siberia, was confused with the real but less conspicuous dangers which the prisoners posed for the Allies in Siberia and Russia by maintaining the Soviet regime in power. But in March the focus was thrown upon the maximum danger, and when in April the factual reports failed to prove the danger of a German seizure of Siberia then the question of an Allied expedition to Russia was shelved. It was not until the Czech-Bolshevik conflict that the issue of prisoners of war in Russia and Siberia exploded and their numbers and role in the

power equation in the country became appreciated, and that the question of the expedition to suppress them received a new consideration.

Also Kennan has fallen victim to this confusion in basing the central argument of his book, *The Decision to Intervene*, upon an erroneous assessment of the number, role and significance of the armed and unarmed prisoners of war in Russia and Siberia in the spring months of 1918.

HISTORICAL MYTH

Having dealt with the German-Bolshevik relations it might be fitting to dispel one historical myth which for years played havoc in the attempts of Czech historians to explain the origin of the conflict of the Czechs with the Bolsheviks. The question was to what extent the German-Bolshevik co-operation had been a factor in its origin.

Although the Czech leaders, and the rank and file in the trains, lacked direct evidence with regard to Moscow-Berlin ties their everyday experience tended to convince them that the Soviet Government had been under the heel of Berlin simply because of the German divisions looming over the defenceless country. The Czechs in Russia went even so far as to suspect a German hand in the halt of the movement of their trains, and in the Soviet Government's orders to disarm and then to dissolve their units to prevent them from proceeding to France. There is no place here to go into the circumstantial evidence which gave rise to this belief beyond stating that it deeply affected the minds and the hearts of the troops in Russia, and that in rather a subtle way it played an important part in shaping their attitude towards the Bolsheviks.¹³³

For many years after the First World War the Czech historians, and those who had directly participated in the conflict, attempted to establish that apart from the motives which the Soviet Government itself might have had in following a policy of retaining the Czechs in Russia, the influence of the German Government also played a part, if not a predominant one.

This school of thought was led by Frantisek Steidler, a much respected historian of the Army Corps in Russia; it was

opposed by Jaroslav Papousek, an official in the Prague Foreign Ministry.¹³¹

Though Steidler was able to marshal plausible circumstantial evidence he failed to produce hard facts any time he was pressed by his adversary. Papousek argued, on the other hand, that he was absolutely positive that no pressure had been put by Germany upon the Soviet Government regarding the Czechs; but he also failed to come up with documentary evidence. The debate finally came to a head in 1933, when Papousek published three documents showing that Germany had exercised no influence upon the Soviet Government as far as the Czechs were concerned, except at the time of signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty.¹³² But this had to do with the disarmament of the Czechs according to its terms and not with their departure for France.¹³³

Papousek argues that Mirbach made his first protest on behalf of Berlin in the matter of the Czechs on June 5, a full day after the Allied representatives had lodged a protest with Chicherin against the attempts of the Soviet Government to forcibly disarm and dissolve the Czech units, and when the conflict was already 10 days old. To prove his case that no German intervention in the matter of the Army Corps had been made before May 25, the day on which the conflict flared up, Papousek cited the following points:

- (1) no document was available to show that a German protest had been made before that date;

- (2) the Diary of K. Von Bothmer, a representative of the German General Staff assigned to Mirbach in Moscow, refers to the Czechs in Russia in very general terms. Even in his official report to Berlin of May 27, 1918, two full days after the first armed exchanges had taken place, no mention is made about the Czechs.

- (3) Papousek possessed documents proving that the first German intervention took place only after the flare-up of the conflict. He obtained these documents from a foreign friend, but abstained from publishing them earlier. Papousek said, however, that he relied upon their evidence in arguing with Steidler already in 1928 in his book entitled *Proc doslo k boju se sovety*.¹³⁷

The documents produced by Papousek make it clear that

neither Vienna, nor Berlin, had taken any steps with the Soviet Government with regard to the Czechs before May 31, 1918. It was only on May 31 that the German Government decided to communicate to the Soviet Government its expectation that the Bolsheviks would prevent the Czechs from leaving for the French Front. It was further decided that a formal protest would be lodged only if the movement of the Czech trains were renewed. Obviously, the Germans knew well that the Bolsheviks had stopped their movement altogether.

The publication of these documents by Papousek closed a controversy over an important point and dispelled a myth which led the Czech historians into a wrong direction in searching for a German intervention to make the Bolsheviks to embark upon a policy of attacking the Army Corps. Many Czech historical works suffer from this distortion. A more recent evidence brought to light by Kennan fully confirms the conclusions arrived at by Papousek.¹²⁸

4

Simmering Rebellion

EARLY DAYS of May 1918 witnessed a serious split, growing at a rapid pace, among the troops of the Army Corps. A rebellion was in the making, soon to overthrow its leadership.

On the one hand were the political and military leaders hopefully believing in the efficacy of their concessions in dealing with the Soviet Government and sinking ever deeper on the road to surrender. These men believed that only the concessions and the display of good will towards the Soviet Government could expedite the departure of the Army Corps from Russia. They even endorsed a scheme whereby the government could contemplate the retention in Russia of the entire First Division. The scheme was the Archangelsk Project, which anticipated that the division would be concentrated between Cheliabinsk-Yekaterinburg-Perm in order to wait there for Allied ships to reach Archangelsk and then take them to France.

On the other hand were the troops and their commanding officers who, from the very outset of the trouble with the government, refused to believe that the appeasement policy of their leadership could ever secure their departure from Russia. These men preached firmness in dealing with the government and local Bolsheviks and instead of letting the things ride showed initiative to arrest the disastrous trend. Anticipating that an armed conflict with the Bolsheviks was inevitable they

SIMMERING REBELLION

started to drill and undertook other measures to protect the Army Corps at the end of the blind alley.

During April the rift between the troops and their leadership grew steadily, and when the latter accepted the Archangelsk Project at the beginning of May the gulf could not be bridged. This was the last straw; the men refused to obey. The upshot was a mutiny which deposed the yielding leadership and placed all power into the hands of a committee willing to renew the movement towards Vladivostok if even by force of arms.

The simmering rebellion among the troops asserted itself for the first time by dealing a blow to the left radicals who were fomenting trouble among the troops, in co-operation with the Czech Communists, for some time. This took place at a conference of the delegates elected by the troops to represent them at the forthcoming Congress of the Czechoslovak Army Corps. The conference in question was a preliminary meeting held in Penza from April 27 to May 1.

We have seen that the men in the Army Corps were subjected to an intensive propaganda campaign of the Czech Bolsheviks in the hope that its proletarian element would desert. Their scheme was, however, defeated precisely by this proletarian element between February and middle April; there was no wave of desertions and only a few most extreme radicals left the Army Corps in Penza and elsewhere.

The Penza pre-congress conference dealt a blow to a new expectation which became current among the Czech Communists during April. Now the Communists pinned their hopes upon the moderate element among the troops, believing that this was sufficiently restless to cast its vote at the conference in favour of the Army Corps remaining in Russia. Though the moderates might not be willing to join the Red Army at once they might refuse to go to France; hence the essential time, and new opportunities, would be won.

The Penza pre-congress conference thus became a new target of the Czech Communists where the ballot box might further their objectives. A number of developments taking place precisely among this moderate stratum of the troops seemed promising and encouraged this perspective.

CONGRESS DELEGATES ELECTED

A great amount of work went into preparation of the Army Congress, planned since the fall of 1917. During January and February 1918 the Army Corps had been rocking with dissent produced by a great debate concerning internal democratization to be introduced at the planned congress. The debate had been initiated in *Ceskoslovensky dennik* early in January, and the closing days of February saw it declining. The evacuation of the Ukraine, which started on February 20, was responsible for this change. The troops had to retreat from the front line positions, concentrate in several railway junctions, secure trains, purchase provisions and board the trains for a journey to Vladivostok. This kept the men busy. By March 13 the whole Army Corps was on wheels. Then came the excitement of the trip: changing landscape, prospects of crossing the mysterious Siberia and an exciting sea voyage half way around the world. For a landlocked people, like the Czechs, a sea voyage was a lifelong ambition. All this turned the minds of the troops away from problems which only yesterday seemed so compelling.

Russia, and everything connected with her, was a closed book also for the National Council. The negotiations with the government had opened the way to Vladivostok, and several members of the Council had earlier been dispatched all along the Trans-Siberian line to secure smooth co-operation of the local Soviets and the railway administrations. According to the time-table prepared by the Penza Railway Administration, the trains could evacuate Central Russia in ten days and reach Vladivostok within a month. As for the internal matters of the Army Corps, the National Council agreed that all unsolved problems should be settled before the troops left Russia. It was understood, however, that these problems would be discussed in light of the tasks lying ahead in France. Russia, and her revolution, were no longer relevant for the Czechoslovaks.

This line of thought was expressed in an article entitled "The Army Congress", in *Ceskoslovensky dennik* on April 4. The article was the voice of the National Council. It said that although the public clamour for the convocation of the Army Congress had declined lately, the National Council was firmly seized with the matter. Only the sudden evacuation of the

Ukraine and, later the impossibility of concentrating the whole Army Corps in one spot, had prevented the National Council from convening the congress at an earlier date. The date had to be postponed several times and, in view of this, the congress would have to be an improvised affair. The article further said that the matter had been discussed at the meeting of the National Council in Penza on April 2, which decided to convene the congress at an earlier date, most probably in Omsk. The preparation of the agenda for the congress, and the drafting of electoral by-laws, were well in progress. The article emphasized that the existing circumstances were much different from those prevailing only a few weeks before, and that the programme originally planned would have to be altered considerably. It stressed that the congress, above all things, must reckon with the fact that the troops were on their way out of Russia, leaving behind one set of circumstances and heading for an environment much different. The writer further said that the congress would have to summarize, evaluate and close the experience which the Czechs had gained in Russia; its major aim would be to outline a programme which would prepare the troops for the new and far more responsible tasks in France. Because the departure of the Army Corps would free the hands of the National Council the congress must define new tasks for this body which would remain in Russia. This, obviously, referred to the work to be done in Omsk in order to organize the Second Army Corps.

The article also tackled a number of technical questions connected with the problem of organizing a congress of such a large body of men dispersed along vast expanses of the *Magistral*. This was not a small matter. The article said that the delegates to the congress would be elected not on the basis of companies, as had originally been planned, but that a train would be the basic electoral unit. As soon as the delegates were elected, the Electoral Commission would dispatch a special train to collect and assemble them in the place designated as the venue of the congress. The concluding part of the article once again emphasized what kind of a congress the National Council planned, and that the leftists would have little room for manoeuvre: the question of whether to go or not to France, and the internal reforms, would not be discussed at all.

The next day, on April 5, *Ceskoslovensky dennik* informed.

its readers that the Electoral Commission had drafted the electoral by laws and on April 9 printed their full text.¹ On April 10 the Commander of the Army Corps issued *Order of the Day No. 46* authorizing the individual commanders of the train to implement the electoral by-laws and communicate to him, first by telegraph and then in writing, the names of the delegates elected.

The technical difficulties and the hundreds of miles separating the trains notwithstanding the election of delegates was executed at once. In this respect the First Division was in a much better position than the Second Division because it was conveniently concentrated. Its rear trains were on the sidings of the railway stations in Lomovis, Kirsano, Rlichevo, Serdobsk, and only a few trains in Penza. Its Third Regiment was, however, in Cheliabinsk. The trains of the Second Division, on the other hand, stretched from Cheliabinsk to Chita and beyond.

As soon as the election was completed the Electoral Commission of the First Division convened the delegates to Penza for a pre-congress conference. This opened on April 27 and was attended by 52 delegates; those of the Third Regiment stationed in Cheliabinsk were absent. The conference was held in a school building loaned to the Electoral Commission by the Penza City Soviet. The agenda featured the following items: debate on political situation; democratization of the army; internal reorganization of the army; disciplinary code and military courts. The leadership planned a quiet meeting.²

MOOD OF THE TROOPS

It was a warm day with the smell of the spring thaw in the air when the delegates assembled in Penza. The gathering was a memorable event, truly reflecting the mood prevailing among the troops. The men were disappointed by the realization that their hopes to be in Vladivostok at the end of April would be frustrated. The Russian scene had undergone a deep change. In January, February and March, the Bolsheviks had been looked upon as a band of desperate men striving hard to hold on the reins of government against tremendous odds, but in no position to harm the Army Corps. But at the end of April it

SIMMERING REBELLION

was realized that the strength which the Bolsheviks had mustered in the meantime, through the Internationalists and otherwise, became a factor which could jeopardize their departure from Russia. This, and the halting of the trains, demands for disarmament, double-dealing of local Soviets, and the support which the Czech Communists were receiving from the Soviet Government, embittered the troops against the Bolsheviks. Also the National Council was criticized by the troops for its lack of firmness and foresight in dealing with the government. The men were angry and impatient.

This mood of exasperation, but at the same time determination to break through the stalemate in transportation, was the driving force behind a group of new radicals which emerged during April. It has already been noted how this restlessness of officers of the First Division had expressed itself in the Kirsanov Resolution of April 13. Now the delegates of this division gathered in Penza at the end of April to voice the feelings of the troops. The debate held in the old school house disclosed three groups existing among the delegates.

The first and most effective group was composed of men who embraced the new radicalism. They demanded far-reaching changes to be introduced in the organization of the army. Not because of sympathy with the left opposition, which also clamoured for changes though for different reasons, but because they believed that the existing organization failed to capture and represent the democratic spirit pervading the whole Czechoslovak Army for a long time. They argued that the Military Commission should be reorganized, detached from the National Council and placed on an independent footing. The National Council was primarily a political body, and therefore its activities should be confined to that sphere. Unfortunately, the Military Commission merely functioned as its subsidiary and, therefore, inadequately voiced the justified demands of the army; the army must have a much better representation. The radicals demanded that a new military commission should be set up to take charge of the transportation of the troops. The fact that the troops were on their way to France, and the expectation that the National Council would remain in Russia, justified this demand, argued the radicals.

The National Council itself came under fire of these men

who questioned the wisdom of the Penza disarmament agreement. Right from the beginning of the negotiations with the government they believed that the Bolsheviki played a foul game and urged the National Council not to disarm. They viewed the Penza Agreement as an initial and grave mistake which set the Council upon a course of concessions, and demanded that a congress of the Army Corps must be convened at once to place the responsibility for the safety of the troops into the hands of the new military commission. This group posed a real challenge to Maxa and the National Council.

The second group of delegates was composed of left radicals. These men were under the influence of the Czech Communists for some time and came to the conference full of determination. During April this left opposition had been attempting to convince the troops that it campaigned no longer for the Red Army but merely defended the right of a common man to state freely whether he wished to go to France or not. They insisted that the National Council lacked the confidence of the troops and demanded the convocation of the congress to test its mandate to the further leadership of the Army Corps. In public debates and private meetings organized in the trains these left radicals charged the National Council with deliberately, and several times, postponing the congress in order to rush the troops to Vladivostok and thus avoid a defeat of its policies and be voted out of power in open ballot.

It is important to note here how the demands of both these opposition groups interacted, and what impact they had on the troops. It must be stressed that the cry of the left radicals for an immediate convocation of the congress was reinforced and, in fact merged, with a similar campaign organized by the radicals from the opposite side. This strong clamour for the convocation of the congress presented a confusing picture to the troops; it was difficult to discern who was who in the tangle and to realize that the campaign was being organized by two opposing groups following aims quite different. The leading men of the left opposition felt satisfied seeing the troops demanding the convocation of the congress, and hoped that the temporary alignment with the other radical wing would force the National Council to convene it. And once the congress were convened,

believed the left radicals, the swinging of vote to the left would be a matter of tactics.

The third group which emerged at the Penza conference was composed of members of the National Council who were supported by some delegates. This group spoke for the official policy, defending it from attacks of both radical wings. It considered any changes in the existing set-up undesirable and maintained that all inadequacies could be removed by reforms and without a major upheaval. This group held that the proposals advanced by both radical groups were detrimental to unity of the Army Corps, which must remain a fighting organization and not turned into a debating club. The spokesmen for the National Council expressed concern over the effects which the proposed democratization measures would have, if introduced within the Army Corps, upon the Allied forces in France and how these innovations would be looked upon by the Allied command. The Czechs would not like to be suspected of Bolshevism.

The members of these three groups conducted intensive agitation among the troops during April, which to an outsider conveyed an impression that the Army Corps was in the midst of a serious trouble. In this respect, the Czech Bolsheviks were fully justified in portraying to Trotsky the troops as being on the brink of a revolution. But the cardinal mistake which they and Trotsky made was their belief that it would be a swing to the left and in favour of the troops deciding to stay in Russia to join the Bolsheviks.

ROUT OF LEFT RADICALS

In this charged atmosphere the delegates of the First Division met in Penza for the pre-congress conference on April 27.³

The very first meeting was stormy. Vice-Chairman Rudolf Medek, who presided, attempted to push through the policy of the body he represented. In his opening address Medek said that the spiritual and ethical values upon which the Czech Army had been founded must be preserved at all cost. The army had only one aim, to bring liberty to the people at home; other problems, like discussion of the social question, could be considered only later. The ideological unity of the troops must be preserved and, as in the past, no sides must be taken

in the internal strife of the Russian people. The only real problem facing the leadership was the speediest and safest transfer of the troops to France; all must work towards its realization. Eisenberger, also from the National Council, took the floor after Medek had set the tone to the proceedings. He informed the delegates about a Franco-Czech Agreement concerning privileges and rights which the Czech soldiers would enjoy in France, and said that in every respect they would be equal to their French comrades. He was emphatic in saying that the transfer of the troops to France was a closed matter and that any further discussion of the topic would be waste of time.

This, however, was not so for the left radicals who threw the meeting into uproar. They came to the meeting in force, determined to press for a show-down. Their leaders expected that the troops, as a result of the propaganda campaign, had elected delegates who would now reject the transfer of the Army Corps to France. The assessment that the situation was ripe for a bid at swinging the balance in an open vote was advocated by Chairman of the Soviet of the First Division J. Mottl, and V. Vanicek. The over-confident left radicals from the Army Corps, led by these two men, had even invited the Czech Communist leaders from the Red Army, A. Hais and O. Skotak, to witness the final assault upon the National Council and the take-over of the Army Corps by them.

Parallel with this operation the Czech Communists planned a large public meeting of the troops of the Army Corps, to be held at the end of the conference to enable the new leftist leadership to assert its control over them. This twin effort was to crown their toil, pursued since the beginning of April to capture the Army Corps, and it was to coincide with a huge public demonstration sponsored by Penza Soviet to celebrate May Day and impress the troops with the goodwill of the Bolsheviks. The whole scheme was conceived as a spectacular public show of the transfer of power.

The opening shot to launch this scheme was fired by V. Vanicek at the conference. Taking the floor immediately after Eisenberger, Vanicek retorted that the exit of the Army Corps from Russia was not at all a closed affair. He said that the recent developments among the troops clearly pointed out

that the National Council had lost the very last vestige of their confidence, ceased to represent them and degenerated into "a private group with no contacts with soldiers". Vaníček demanded that the troops must be given an opportunity, there and then, to express themselves whether they wished to go to France "to die for the interests of imperialists". The mood prevailing among the troops and their opposition against the policies of the National Council showed, said Vaníček, that these 40,000 men were being dragged against their will to Vladivostok. This criminal design perpetrated upon innocent victims must be immediately undone because were the congress held in Vladivostok, as planned by the Council, the shadow of bayonets of Japanese soldiers would prevent the men from freely expressing their will. Vaníček's demand for the congress to be held in Penza at once was supported by Mottl, who pressed forward another request: new Soviets must be set up in all units at once. These demands of the left radicals were further hammered in by Srutek and Pexa, but the emphasis was placed upon the immediate convocation of the congress. The room was charged with excitement, for no one knew the alignment of forces at that moment and how the voting would turn out.

Leaving aside the verbal exchanges which this assault upon the National Council produced, when finally the votes were counted all proposals of the left radicals were defeated by united forces of the First and the Fourth Regiments, aided by some delegates of the Second Regiment; the majority of the Second Regiment abstained. It was a close vote, because the other radical wing voted with the left opposition on the issue of the convocation of the congress. But the defeat was clear and sealed the fate of left radicalism within the Army Corps. The ambition of the Czech Communists and their Russian sponsors to seize the leadership of this body in an open ballot failed. As a result, the entire leadership of the left opposition—Mottl, Vaníček, Koudelka, Synek and Vasek—and their comrades from the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Hais and Skotak, left the room.⁴

One more defeat, more painful and decisive, was in store for these men. The troops rejected them at a public meeting on May 2, which was planned to crown the take-over of the

Army Corps. The expected public spectacle turned into a humiliating fiasco.

The programme of the second day of the conference, held on April 28, dealt with the problem of democratization of the army. As soon as the reporter finished reading his brief the meeting was stormed by the radicals from the other wing. Speaking on their behalf, V. Rocek from the Fourth Regiment, requested the members of the National Council to explain whose idea it had been to conclude the Penza disarmament agreement with the Bolsheviks. The people responsible for this, and the subsequent disarmament to which they had surrendered, placed the Army Corps in a very dangerous situation. It was foolish to disarm in midst of chaos. The developments taking place around the Army Corps at that time hardly augured for a peaceful departure from Russia. Rocek warned that great trouble lay ahead and that fighting was inevitable.

Another serious charge of the radicals from the Fourth Regiment against the National Council was made by Lieutenant Cecek, who presented a proposal on the reorganization of the Military Commission. It came as a shock to the members of the National Council, for Cecek demanded nothing short of abolition of that body. Cecek suggested that the existing Military Commission be transformed into the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Military Council. The new body would take over all functions formerly performed by the Military Commission and be responsible only to the National Council in Paris. It would become one of the Council's organs upon the arrival of the Army Corps in France. The project of Cecek also entailed a proposal for setting up of several departments of the new body: financial, personnel, political, health, educational and justice. The nature and competence of the proposed body was fully revealed in the last paragraph of his draft, which said that the right to dismiss any military commander would be vested in the hands of its chairman, or his deputies, subject to the approval of the Paris National Council. The chiefs of individual departments could be dismissed by the chairman alone, as these would be merely administrative posts.

The proposal left no room for doubts as to the intention of its sponsors. It frankly advocated a non-violent revolution to remove the existing civilian leadership of the Army Corps and

place the matter of transportation of the troops to France into the hands of military men who would show more firmness and foresight in dealing with the Bolsheviks. According to this proposal the civilian members of the National Council would remain in Russia to apply themselves to the task of organizing the Second Army Corps in Omsk; the experience gained so far would make their work advance at a swift pace.

The proposal of Cecek threw the meeting into a heated exchange. The opponents of the project, the men from the Council and their followers, could not muster enough votes to kill it at once and therefore the next day, April 29, the project appeared on the agenda again. Even then the official bloc was unable to defeat it. A special commission was set up to consider the proposal and prepare a draft to be presented to the congress for final decision. This was a major victory for the radicals from the Fourth Regiment, which was to have a decisive effect upon future developments within the Czech camp.

Without reaching too far into the narrative of future events it can be mentioned here that the project was later presented to the Army Congress held in Omsk in August 1918. But the *coup* against the National Council, which failed at the Penza conference at the end of April, was to be executed within short three weeks: on May 20 the Council was deprived of all authority in military matters, which was placed into the hands of a Provisional Executive Committee empowered to renew the movement of troops towards Vladivostok at all cost. At the time of the Penza conference, the majority of delegates was not yet ready for such a drastic step. It took another three weeks of provocations by the Czech Bolsheviks, and an irrefutable evidence showing the Soviet Government ready to strike against the Army Corps, to make the delegates to the Army Corps Congress assembled in Cheliabinsk on May 20, to depose the Council and decide for even a forcible exit from Russia.

The victory which the radicals of the Fourth Regiment had won in the morning session of the Penza conference on April 29 prompted fifteen of them to press forward an urgent motion demanding an immediate convocation of the congress in Irkutsk. The attack was mounted as soon as the defeated Czech Bolsheviks and their friends cleared out of the room. The sponsors hoped that, in the first place, the congress would approve their

proposal concerning the setting up of the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Council. Secondly, they thought that an immediate congress in Irkutsk would deprive the left opposition of any propaganda capital this might derive from the postponement of the congress until Vladivostok. Again a long discussion followed, but the motion was finally defeated by 28 to 26 votes. The entire delegation of the Fourth Regiment and almost a half of the Second Regiment voted in favour, while the members of the Council, seconded by the whole delegation of the First Regiment and majority of the Second Regiment, voted against. Instead, a decision was adopted that it would be upon the discretion of the National Council to convene the congress as soon as convenient and at any place of its choosing.⁵

Though the National Council scored a narrow victory, the vote brought a remarkable degree of pacification into further deliberations. On April 30 the discussion again centred upon the problem of internal reorganization and Cecek's project. In the morning of May 1 the presidium of the conference organized a huge public meeting of the troops at the Penza railway station. The gathering was presided over by K. Zmrhal and V. Rocek, and was addressed by F. Maisner, J. David, and F. Polak. These men were well known and their popularity rallied the troops behind the National Council. A resolution adopted by the meeting proclaimed that the National Council was the only legitimate representative of the Czechoslovak Army in Russia; the matter of its transfer to France had irrevocably been decided and any attempt to change the decision would be resisted.⁶ The Czechs closed their ranks.

The last two meetings of the conference were held in the afternoon of May 1 and the morning of the next day. The draft of a project concerning the reorganization of the Army Soviets, prepared already in December 1917 in Kiev, was approved. The meeting then elected a committee to draft a new military manual. The last important question was whether the Council should issue documents of honourable discharge from service in the Army Corps to those who might wish to join the Red Army. The proposal was rejected by 37 to 15 votes, which was a reversal of the previous stand discussed earlier. The conference closed by adopting unanimously a political resolution.

PUBLIC FIASCO

The May First public demonstration organized by the presidium of the conference at the railway station in Penza was a spectacle which, in a curious way, transformed the discontent and impatience of the troops into a manifestation of loyalty to the National Council. The meeting was addressed by two young but influential Socialist leaders, J. David and F. Polak, who in an outburst of emotions appealed to the Socialists among the men to rally behind the Council.⁷ A feeling of unity of purpose filled the air. The poor show of the Penza Bolsheviks at their public manifestation celebrating the May Day, boycotted by the local population, contrasted vividly with the spirited and enthusiastic display of the Czechs in which a large crowd of Russian citizens participated.

In view of this public display of loyalty by the troops to the National Council and their clear and unanimous attitude to the transfer to France, the Czech Communists made a bad mistake in going ahead with the planned public meeting in an attempt to appeal directly to soldiers, who were all invited. The meeting was held on May 2, also at the Penza railway station, in which the entire Czech Red Army participated; it drew also a large number of troops of the Army Corps. A member of the Czech Communist Party, F. Ruzicka, led the attack on the National Council with an accusation that the departure of the troops had not been negotiated with the government, that the Soviet authorities had never agreed to it, and that the transfer was a foul play of the bourgeois leadership. In fact the troops had been sold to western imperialists for a big profit. Dr Svoboda, Assistant to the Chairman of the Soviet of the Eighth Regiment of the Army Corps, took the floor in defence of the Council and in a remarkable speech wrecked the whole scheme of the Czech Communists: there were no deserters; and when the troops began to sing the national anthem the Red Army men hesitantly joined in.⁸ This was a public fiasco which the leftists within the Army Corps could not live down. Subsequently, they all resigned and issued a public declaration to that effect.⁹

The public fiasco of May 2 terminated the Soviet Government's policy of attempting to win, through peaceful efforts of

the Czech Communists, the proletarian core of the Army Corps, and within two days initial steps were taken towards a forcible solution. On May 5 Trotsky ordered the commissars in Penza to watch closely the developments taking place among the Czech troops and report to him periodically the number of troops of each train, its armament, movement and location at each time.¹⁰

This was a reconnaissance activity preceding the decision to liquidate the Army Corps reached in Moscow within ten days.

APPEASEMENT TO DEAD END

The National Council failed to heed the writing on the wall apparent at the Penza conference and followed appeasement to the very end. The Council reached the point of no return by its acquiescence in General Ogorodnik's plan suggesting divided transportation of the Army Corps: the First Division to proceed to Archangelsk, the Second Division to Vladivostok. This was the last blunder which the Council committed in believing that its concessions would earn the goodwill of the Soviet Government. The Army Corps, however, was saved from this trap because the forces which had gathered at the Penza conference asserted themselves in time and deposed both the political and the military leadership bent upon its implementation.

The origin of the Archangelsk Project, or Ogorodnik's plan, has already been discussed. It will be recalled that the general had presented his plan to General Lavergne, the French Military Attache, shortly after the Japanese landing in Vladivostok which took place on April 5, and that Lavergne forwarded it to Paris on April 11. Moreover, Ogorodnik presented his plan to the Czech leadership in Moscow during his interview with Svagrovsky.

Subsequent to that, Ogorodnik's plan was discussed between the French and the Czechs during Cermak's interview with Lavergne in Moscow on April 23. Lavergne said that he had been approached by the Soviet Government with a suggestion that the Czech troops be sent to Archangelsk. Being aware of the details of Ogorodnik's proposal to Svagrovsky,

SIMMERING REBELLION

Cermak asked Lavergne whether the proposal had been made to him also by Ogorodnik, which Lavergne confirmed. In view of this, Cermak made the following proposal to the general as reported to the National Council:

"France would certainly win friendship of Russia if she gave to the disposal of the Soviet Government one or two our regiments at Archangelsk. Such an offer, however, would have to be guaranteed by the Soviets so that we could replace these troops by new recruits. General Lavergne would conduct the entire negotiations with the Soviet Government; we would not participate in the talks. Lavergne said that he would agree with the proposal. On my part I emphasized that I am not sure whether our troops would agree to such a plan, and that I must first clarify the situation with you. Here then is the result of my talk with Lavergne, and it is for you to decide. Until I have your answer, nothing will be done in this matter."¹¹

The report of Cermak was discussed at a meeting of the National Council in Omsk on April 29, which first dealt with Chicherin's telegram of April 21. This telegram, it will be recalled, said that Germany had requested an immediate evacuation of her prisoners of war from Eastern to Western Siberia or European Russia, and that there was no need to transport the Czechs to the east. The reference to Berlin, given publicly in a government communication, confirmed in the eyes of the men assembled in Omsk their own notion that the real source of their trouble with the Bolsheviks was the pressure which Berlin was putting upon the Soviet Government demanding disarmament and dissolution of their troops.

In this situation the proposal of General Ogorodnik, which had already been discussed by Lavergne and Cermak, offered a possible solution because it would speed up the departure from Russia. In fact, Maxa himself began to consider the northern ports as a solution of the impasse shortly after Chicherin's cable of April 21 had stopped the movement of trains of the Army Corps. On April 27 he reported from Krasnoyarsk to his colleagues in Omsk that he had already requested Major Verge to plead with the Allies to demand from the Soviet Government

an immediate renewal of the movement of the troops. He had further recommended to Verge that he should depute a special courier to Vologda and Moscow to suggest to the Allies that perhaps the transportation could be accelerated if the Army Corps were divided. One section could continue to Vladivostok and one could be directed to the northern ports.¹²

After a long discussion of Cermak's report on his interview with General Lavergne the National Council made the following decision on April 29. Maxa, Markovic and Janik would go to Vologda to talk with the French and then to Moscow to negotiate with the Soviet Government. The delegation would first demand that the entire Army Corps be transported to Vladivostok; were this impossible, then it would agree to the transfer of the First Division to Archangelsk. Only under most adverse conditions would the delegation consent to the transfer of the First Division to Murmansk, because it would be difficult to procure enough supplies in that part of Russia. No solution, however, would be accepted without a complete agreement of the Allies.

Another important discussion at this meeting dealt with the possibility of the Allies demanding military service from some Czech troops at the northern ports or Siberia while on their way out of Russia. It was Maxa who introduced the subject, obviously referring to Cermak's interview with Lavergne about Ogorodnik's plan. The meeting agreed that should the Allies demand such a military service, the decision whether to comply or not would be left to the congress of the Army Corps, to be held shortly. In arriving at this consensus the meeting based itself upon the experience of some Czech troops which, under the command of Captain Gibis, had already been transported to France through the north. The troops, about 1,200 men, had departed from the Ukraine in September 1917, became stranded over a terrible winter in the north in a railway station called Cheperovec, and at the beginning of March 1918 assisted to cover the British landing. They embarked, finally, and left for France after six months of waiting.¹³

However, all plans agreed upon were upset the next day, April 30, when the Soviet of Irkutsk, acting upon instructions of Chicherin and Bonch-Bruievich, cabled to Omsk that the Army Corps should be divided, Omsk to be the dividing line.

As soon as the National Council learnt from the Military Commissariat of the Omsk Soviet about the order to divide the Army Corps the Council resolved that "this decision had been made without understanding with the Czechoslovak leadership and, therefore, violated the Penza Agreement of March 26, 1918".¹⁴

The National Council was justly upset, because it appeared that the government in Moscow had acted upon its own initiative and not on a request from the French. The reason was that Cermak had an agreement with Lavergne that no steps would be undertaken by the French with the government in that matter until the Council had informed them about its decision. And as we have seen, no decision from the meeting of the previous day had been communicated to the Czechs in Moscow or the French in Vologda; also the delegation was still in Omsk.

In view of this, the Council deputed Kudela, Janik and Glos to the Omsk Military Commissariat to lodge a protest and ascertain what possible mischief was behind the order. The Military Commissar Furtsov told the delegates that although the order had been received from Irkutsk it really originated with the Central Government in Moscow; it was signed by Chicherin for the Foreign Commissariat and Bonch-Bruievich for the War Commissariat. The Czechs protested that it was a unilateral action violating the Penza Agreement, to which the commissar bluntly retorted that the Soviet Government had no reasons to assist the Czechs out of Russia: they refused to give military assistance to the government and rejected its invitation to join the Red Army or the brigades of Internationalists.

The record of this interview is too scanty to show how the delegates took this news. It merely mentions that Furtsov was warned that such an attitude might provoke armed clashes which, eventually, could have serious consequences. At this point, Furtsov became really angry. He said that the Bolsheviks had crushed all their opponents and now even the Czechs could be handled. Following this sharp exchange the delegates wished to avoid a further deterioration of the situation and merely pleaded for postponement of the execution of the order so that they could contact the government in Moscow and the Soviet in Irkutsk.¹⁵

The request was granted, and Maxa went first to Irkutsk to convince the Soviet that not only the trains east of Omsk should continue to Vladivostok, but also those few trains west of Omsk which belonged to the Second Division. The Army Corps should be divided into its First and Second Division, the trains of the latter to continue to Vladivostok regardless of whether they were east or west of Omsk. The Irkutsk Soviet agreed, and informed the Soviet in Omsk as well as Moscow to that effect.¹⁶

Then the Council started a frantic search to find out upon whose initiative the order of April 30 had been issued. Was it upon the initiative of the Soviet Government or the French? The Council knew that Lavergne had promised to Cermak on April 23 that he would take no steps with the Soviet authorities until he heard from the National Council.

To find the answer to this question the National Council deputed Cermak back to Moscow and Straka to Vologda. They also had to convey to the French and the Soviet Government the Council's decision of April 29, which had placed a premium upon the continuation of the movement of the entire Army Corps to Vladivostok and which visualized the possibility of divided transportation as a less desirable alternative and only if unavoidable.

Straka met Ambassador Noulens in Vologda on May 8 and from the record of the meeting it seems that the Army Corps had been divided upon the initiative of the Soviet Government. Straka conveyed to the ambassador the first priority of the National Council, and said that the Allies should exert their influence on the government to persuade it to renew the transportation of the entire Army Corps to Vladivostok. Noulens was surprised and said that in fact he was glad that the government "had issued its order" directing the troops to Archangelsk and Murmansk because this was advantageous to the Allies. In the first place, the transportation from the north of Russia to France would be much shorter; moreover, it would not tie up the tonnage for several months as a shipment from Vladivostok would do. Second, military considerations favoured the north. The mere presence of the Czech troops in the north would prevent the Germans and the Finns from seizing the railway. It was for these reasons that the French had really

welcomed the order of the government; the Czechs should not suspect it as a trap or a dishonest scheme of the Bolsheviks. It was the result of the changed political situation in Russia and entailed no danger to the Czech troops.

This, reports Straka, "placed me in an awkward situation; instead of a supporter I met an adversary. It is quite definite that we cannot count on the Allies to support our efforts with the Soviet Government regarding Vladivostok." In view of this, "I myself ceased to be pessimistic. A proposal was made that I should approve, in the name of the National Council, the division of the Army Corps; this, however, I refused to do." Instead, after the meeting Straka made an arrangement whereby the embassy cabled to the French Consul at Irkutsk to inform the National Council in Omsk about the whole matter and request a decision. The telegram mentioned that Straka had favoured such a solution.¹⁷ This communication was received in Irkutsk and forwarded to Omsk on May 8.

The next day, May 9, Straka met Commandant Lelong, Assistant Military Attache, who just arrived from Moscow. Lelong had been deputed to Vologda by General Lavergne to inform the ambassador about his negotiations with Cermak, who was at that time in Moscow. Lelong corroborated the information which the ambassador had given to Straka and added that the order of April 30 dividing the Army Corps, as well as Ogorodnik's interview with Svagrovsky and Cermak, had been made by the Soviet Government "under the influence of the Allies . . . Cermak had anyway been informed in detail" about the Allied-Bolshevik negotiations in this matter.¹⁸ This, obviously, referred to Cermak's interview with Lavergne on April 23.

In the meantime, the National Council impatiently waited in Omsk for the news from Cermak and Straka. On May 6 Cermak telegraphed from Moscow that the plan of the divided transportation was a joint Allied-Bolshevik project, and then on May 8 came Straka's cable from Vologda through Irkutsk to the same effect.¹⁹ In view of this, the Council deputed Maxa, Janik and Markovic to Moscow to deal directly with the Allies and the Soviet Government; the delegation left Omsk on May 9.

The delegates met General Lavergne in Moscow on May 13,

who told them that the project of the divided transportation of the Army Corps had really been agreed upon by the French and the British. To set the record straight about its origin, which interested the Czechs most, the general said that the idea originated with the Soviet Government and then repeated the story of how General Ogorodnik had approached him at the beginning of April.²⁰

The interview with Lavergne made the Czech leaders drop all their reservations and suspicions about the plan of divided transportation. Now the matter was in the hands of the Allies, and the Czechs hoped they would be spared the trouble of dealing on their own with the Soviet Government as the Allies themselves now became guarantors of their departure. With the matter settled on the Allied side, the delegation sought an interview with Trotsky to make the necessary technical arrangements. The delegates placed high hopes upon this crucial meeting as they wished to obtain a clear picture of why the government had not honoured the Penza Agreement and find out the reasons for the shifts in its policy.

From the reports on the meeting with Trotsky, held on May 15, it appears that the delegation was composed of Maxa, Janik and Cermak and that it spent with him more than two hours.²¹ Trotsky stubbornly opposed any further movement of the troops eastward and argued that the government feared the possibility of their collusion with the Anglo-Japanese landing in Vladivostok. Knowing the situation in Vladivostok fairly well the delegates retorted that there was no landing to speak of,²² and no danger to Soviet authority due to the presence of their troops in that port. In fact, the Vladivostok Soviet had twice cabled to the Soviet of Central Siberia in Irkutsk, and the Soviet of Western Siberia in Omsk, requesting them to let the troops proceed to that port because most cordial relations existed there between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks.

Trotsky then said that the government would honour the agreement which had been concluded by the National Council with the Soviet in Irkutsk to the effect that all trains of the Second Division would be permitted to move to Vladivostok. He added, however, that he was not prepared to guarantee that these trains would ever reach there because on that section

of the railway the Czechs faced great risks. On the other hand, he could guarantee that the troops of the First Division, allocated for Archangelsk, would remain intact and the whole division transported as a unit. The delegates said that they would agree to the division of the Army Corps, provided that the First Division were directed to Archangelsk and not Murmansk, and provided that it were concentrated west of the Ural Mountains so that it could procure supplies and sustain itself while waiting for the ships. The Murmansk line had been built during the war by sweat and toil of prisoners of war, said the visitors, and a good deal of Czechs and Slovaks had perished there of illness, hunger and exposure.

Trotsky then opened a topic which surprised his visitors. He said that the General Staff of the Red Army had been seized with the problem of the Czechs for a long time; it prepared a plan proposing the division of the Army Corps and transportation of its First Division to Archangelsk partly on the railway and partly on the northern arm of River Dvina. He said, however, that now he would approach the government with a proposal of the Czechs concerning Archangelsk, instead of Murmansk, as a port of departure of the First Division; but the British and the French must request this of him and guarantee at the same time that the needed tonnage would be available in that port. The record does not indicate what the delegates said to the proposal of the transportation on Dvina River, they could not have been enthusiastic, but they promised to approach the French and the British with a request to furnish Trotsky with the demanded guaranty. To enable the First Division to begin its movement, its troops to be concentrated before the Ural Mountains, the delegates requested the commissar to issue pertinent transportation orders. This he promised, but said that regarding supplies and technical matters the delegates would have to negotiate with other Soviet authorities. At the end of the interview the visitors complained against the campaign of lies and insults waged by the Czech Communists against the National Council. This, replied the Commissar of War, did not concern him; it was Stalin's business. It seems that the delegates did not wish to revive the old differences plaguing the Czech-Bolshevik relations since the Penza Agreement days and let the matter

rest there. They looked forward to the departure of their troops from Russia, which now seemed within reach again. The old differences were forgotten and, as Markovic reported from Moscow, "the general impression from this interview is very favourable".²³

With the air cleared by the interview with Trotsky the delegates jubilantly set out to implement the agreement just arrived at, and immediately after the visit hastened to inform the French and British about the result of their conference with the War Commissar and his requests. The Allies responded at once, and even let the delegates read a text of a joint Anglo-French note on the subject, to be presented to Chicherin and Trotsky, which requested the Soviet Government to designate Archangelsk as a port of departure for the troops.²⁴ Regarding the second request of Trotsky, demanding a declaration about tonnage, Lockhart had already been authorized by London before May 15 to present the Bolshevik authorities with a written statement to the effect that the British Government had assumed full responsibility for the tonnage but, at the moment, was unable to give any exact date when this would be available. In fact, such a statement had already been submitted to the Soviet authorities by Lockhart.²⁵

The next day, May 16, the delegation opened negotiations with several commissariats to iron out details of the transportation and supply arrangements agreed upon in broad terms with Trotsky. Because the required tonnage was not immediately available, the spokesmen for the government agreed that all trains west of Omsk should be concentrated in districts of Omsk, Cheliabinsk and Yekaterinburg and remain there until the tonnage were on hand.²⁶ The Czechs easily could make new supply arrangements with the Co-operative Societies to sustain themselves there as long as necessary.

All problems which the delegates pessimistically expected to crop up in negotiating the implementation of the plan on divided transportation of the troops, agreed upon with Trotsky, vanished as if by magic. Unbelievable as it seemed the Bolshevik authorities showed a friendly and co-operative spirit not experienced since the days of the Penza Agreement. Highly optimistic reports and cables flew out of Moscow to the National Council in Paris and the headquarters in Omsk, and the

obviously pleased delegation dispatched a courier to Vologda to brief the Allies.

The office of the National Council in Omsk was in continuous telegraphic connection with Moscow and buzzed with excitement. As soon as the delegation walked out of the interview with Trotsky, Maxa cabled to Omsk instructions advising the Council to divide the Army Corps at once. The Council adopted a formal decision to that effect on May 15 and requested the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Corps to prepare a plan whereby the *Second Division* would continue rolling to Vladivostok while the *First Division* would be directed to Archangelsk. The general and his staff worked overnight and presented their plan on the next day; the Council approved and immediately undertook steps to execute it. The trains of the *First Division* received instructions to concentrate between Cheliabinsk and Perm. The paymaster was ordered to issue cash payment to the commander of each train so that he could purchase supplies on his own; in addition, each train was allotted four carloads of provisions from available stocks. On May 21 the commanders of trains learnt that the movement would start on the next day.²⁸

But the evening dusk set in on May 22 without seeing the trains moving an inch. The National Council was too engrossed in implementing the Archangelsk Project to notice that the other party to the bargain, the Soviet Government, again failed to perform. As soon as the *First Division* was told by the National Council shortly after May 8 that the plan of divided transportation had been approved by the Allies, the command of the division and the Divisional Soviet deputed Lenfeld from Penza to Moscow to take up the whole matter with Maxa, the French representatives and the Soviet Government. He was authorized to reject the project in the name of officers and men of his division. In Moscow he informed Maxa that this was a unanimous decision of the entire Penza group, which would not yield. The French, however, won him over. According to Lenfeld's own account, "I let General Lavergne to convince me about the necessity of the Archangelsk Project."²⁹

Then he saw Trotsky, who promised that all trains of the *First Division* would be moved beyond Samara to be able to

procure supplies and sustain themselves there until ships were available. Trotsky further promised to Lenfeld that all necessary transportation orders would be issued at once and their certified copies given to him for the authorities in Penza; these must be executed without delay. This was, however, an empty promise. Lenfeld had to leave Moscow without receiving the copies of the transportation orders and wrote from Penza to the National Council in Omsk on May 20: "Now I have been three days in Penza after my return from Moscow and the orders, or at least a courier, are nowhere in sight."²⁹ The orders, unfortunately, never came. This closed the story of the western section of the Army Corps, of the entire First Division, five days after the over-all settlement with Trotsky.

The trains of the eastern section of the Army Corps, allocated for transfer to Vladivostok, fared no better. After receiving Maxa's green light from Moscow, the National Council in Osmk convinced the Soviet in Irkutsk to lift the ban on the movement of trains between Omsk and Irkutsk and let them proceed towards Vladivostok. A copy of a cable issued by the Irkutsk Soviet to that effect was officially handed over to the representative of the National Council in Irkutsk, V. Spacek, on May 15. But one member of the Soviet railway staff in Irkutsk, who sympathized with the plight of the Czechs, told Spacek that the technicians had been instructed not to execute the order and, therefore, the ban on the movement of the trains had not been lifted. Tracing the instruction to its source Spacek discovered that it had been issued by General von Taube, former Tsarist officer, who served the Irkutsk Soviet as Chief of its Communication Department. The Bolsheviks attempted to dismiss the issue by alleging that Taube's deputy had issued the instruction by mistake.³¹ But the movement of trains to Vladivostok was not renewed even after the repeal of Taube's instruction.

With the new stalemate on both ends of the train column of the Army Corps the appeasement policy of the National Council, inspired by Maxa, reached a dead end. How badly Maxa misread the intentions of the Bolsheviks in that stage, and overrated the influence of the Allies upon the Soviet Government, became tragically clear a few days later when Trotsky personally led an attack to annihilate the Army Corps

and threw Maxa in jail.

MEN DRILL FOR ACTION

It would be wrong to think that all members of the Army Corps were prepared to follow the appeasement policy of Maxa and his colleagues to its end. The story just narrated described the course steered only by its political and military leaders. There was a vast difference in the manner in which the rank and file responded to the whims of Soviet authorities and the continuous humiliations suffered at the hands of local Bolsheviks and the Czech Communists. This difference was the root cause of a rift which steadily grew between the troops and their leaders.

The origin of the rift goes back to the Penza Agreement of March 26, when the men had rebelled against its disarmament provisions but submitted in the end. By the time of the conference of congress delegates, held in Penza at the end of April, the gulf reached, however, serious proportions. It will be remembered that the spokesmen for the troops challenged the policies of the National Council and called for placing power in the hands of men capable of breaking through the impasse in transportation before the situation deteriorated beyond repair. The troops expressed a similar attitude through measures designed to improve their combat readiness for a conflict which they thought unavoidable should the concessions to the Bolsheviks continue. The men and officers believed that the conflict could be avoided only if the troops retained their arms and made the Bolsheviks renew the movement through the threat of their use. This sharply contrasted with the policy practised by the leaders of the National Council.

In their daily contacts with the Bolsheviks while buying supplies, dealing with transportation commissars and visiting towns and villages, the troops had a chance to experience the efficacy of a strong hand: the Bolsheviks respected force. Anytime armed men accompanied the negotiators, or supply agents, results were obtained without difficulty. This was true particularly in Penza where the local Soviet, prodded by the Czech Communists, showed an extremely unco-operative and aggressive attitude. Because in middle of April the

aggressiveness became unbearable the radicals of the Fourth Regiment, the men who a few days later were to lead the rebellion at the conference in Penza, decided to clear the air and calm down the agitated Bolsheviks by an armed demonstration. They dispatched a group of forty men armed to teeth, under the command of Lieutenant Gajer, to pass several times through Penza on April 24.³² The result was astonishing. The armed demonstration made the people gather in the streets and give vent to an outburst of anti-Bolshevik feelings; the city resounded with anti-government slogans calling for its overthrow and return to constitutional authority. Seeing this spectacle, some officials of the Soviet began to pack files ready to leave the town. After the demonstration the atmosphere in Penza markedly improved, and the Soviet even obliged the Czechs by lending them a school building to enable the pre-congress conference to take place on April 27.

In the meantime, the officers of the Army Corps put their men through severe drill. Lieutenant J. Svec prepared a drill manual on the pattern of a drill used by the Sokol gymnastic organization in Bohemia. This was practised by the troops of the whole First Division stranded around Penza.³³ Especially the command of the Fourth Regiment, which was the westernmost unit of the division assigned the guard duty, put its men through a strenuous physical training and conditioning. As recorded by official historian of the regiment, M. Plesky, three weeks of waiting around Penza at the railway stations of Serdobsrk, Lomovis and Kolyshnei made the men restless; to kill time they plunged into an intensive training which became the favourite pastime. The growing military strength and aggressiveness of the Bolsheviks, coupled with the pleading of the National Council for trust and patience, soon convinced the men that the departure from Russia might not be achieved without a fight; the drill, until then indulged in for fun, became geared to this possibility in middle of April. The emphasis shifted from purely gymnastic exercises to drills in handling machine guns and throwing grenades and bombs. The command prepared an operational plan at the beginning of May whereby the Second and the Fifth Companies of the Fourth Regiment were assigned the task of seizing Serdobsrk and disarming the Red Army if needed. The reconnaissance

parties were dispatched to Rtischevo and Penza to report upon the number, position and movement of Bolshevik troops. The commander of the First Division dispatched 4 officers (Dusek, Smetak, Blazek and Aulehla), and 40 men to Samara with a special task on May 12. The men were to collect intelligence about the Bolshevik forces guarding the railway line between Syzran and Samara and find out how they guarded the Alexandrovsk Bridge over Volga. The officers were instructed to prepare a plan whereby the bridge could be seized without damage, should the National Council decide for an armed solution of the stalemate. The preparatory measures around the bridge had to be undertaken at once.³¹

Also at the easternmost flank of the train column in Siberia, removed several hundred miles from Penza, the men and officers gave up all hope of peaceful departure with the result that the commander of the Seventh Regiment, Captain Rudolf Gajda, began to plan a military solution of the impasse. It must be stressed at the outset that at that time these two army groups did not co-operate, and that whatever operational plans were prepared by their commanders these had been conceived independently as measures of self-help to avert an impending disaster clear to everyone but the leaders of the Council.

Captain Gajda was one of the most colourful and able among the commanders of the Army Corps in Russia, who was to shoot to fame through his daring but brilliantly executed military feats in the anti-Bolshevik campaign during the summer of 1918. Seeing the dangerous trend and the failure of negotiated attempts to get the troops out of Russia he became convinced that the movement could be resumed only by force. Consequently, he started drilling his men so that they could give armed assistance to the troops of the First Division in due time, stranded in the centre of Bolshevik encirclement around Penza. The trains of the Seventh Regiment, under his command, occupied the easternmost flank of the train column, except for 15 trains already in Vladivostok, and spread along the *Magistral* between Omsk and Irkutsk. Gajda's plan evolved from this strategic position. With a remarkable foresight Gajda realized that it was imperative not to let his trains give up their position, even if the Bolsheviks offered to send them to Vladivostok. It

was a luring thought to get them finally to Vladivostok, but under the existing conditions this would be a bad mistake. The position which Gajda's trains occupied was the gate to the east; if lost, the entire First Division would remain landlocked around Penza and separated by thousands of miles from a source of possible assistance from Vladivostok. Were this position surrendered and the Bolsheviks permitted to build a force between Omsk and Irkutsk, or merely dismantle the railway there, then the Penza group would have a very thin chance of breaking through.

Basing himself upon these considerations Gajda prepared a plan of action, to be executed upon orders either of the National Council or a military group which might be put in charge of the task of renewing the movement. The plan was simple. Should the Soviet authorities fail to respond to an ultimatum requesting the renewal of the movement of the trains out of the Penza basin, and should the leadership decide for a military solution, then the troops under Gajda's command would first seize the line between Omsk and Irkutsk and then return from Siberia to Russia to establish contact with the army groups based upon Cheliabinsk and Penza. Admittedly, this was a formidable task; but Gajda, a young man of 26, tackled it with competence and imagination of a seasoned strategist.

On May 3 he sat down in his staff train in Novonikolaievsk and drafted the famous *Order No. 38/1, Plan of Action* and *Secret Code*, the latter to enable him secret communication with his troops (Documents No. 5 and 6). The order placed the whole group on alert. Writing on May 8 to the National Council, then in Omsk, he frankly warned:

"... I am personally convinced that sooner or later a conflict with the Bolsheviks is inevitable and that the sooner it happens the better for us. For this reason I have undertaken a number of measures which would place our troops in a favourable position. I have also obtained intelligence and undertaken measures needed for an eventual seizure of the railway line between Novonikolaievsk-Krasnoyarsk-Irkutsk-Chita-Karymskaia. Now I am waiting for instructions of the National Council, or the Command, to

put these measures into effect . . ."³⁵

The intelligence work and preparations regarding the possibility of seizure of the railway line obviously referred to about 40 tunnels around Lake Baikal, which had been dynamited through a joint German-Bolshevik effort to be blown up should Japanese or Allied troops advance from Vladivostok into Siberia. This explains why Gajda, when the order to start the operations against the Bolsheviks arrived, secured all tunnels before the Bolshevik and German technicians could destroy even one of them.

While Gajda merely planned, the men of the Penza group acted. They once again put to test their belief that force was the only language the Bolsheviks understood and respected. When the aggressive tactics of local commissars hit a new pitch, the troops in Serdobsk organized an armed demonstration by parading the fully armed Fourth Regiment through the streets on May 18. As during the demonstration in Penza on April 24, also in Serdobsk the local Soviet started packing. The demonstration in Serdobsk had, however, a far greater and more significant effect upon the troops in the Volga basin. The National Council was now openly criticized for going too far in its concessions to the Bolsheviks and voices appeared demanding that the troops themselves should tackle the problem of renewing the transportation if their leaders lacked courage. The men passionately argued that by disarming and allowing the trains to be dispersed, the Council had foolishly deprived the Army Corps of the only means, its own armed strength, which could secure the departure from Russia.³⁶

There was no other way for the Council and the military leadership to meet the growing clamour for an immediate and radical solution of the deadlock except by placing themselves at the helm of events to ride the crest of the mood rocking the troops and by agreeing to a forcible resumption of the transportation demanded by them. This, however, the Council and the military leaders were not prepared to do.

THE LAST STRAW

The gulf between the National Council and the troops

Division already in Vladivostok. The article had no favourable effect upon the troops; on the contrary, the men began questioning the soundness of judgment of the French. It was unbelievable that the French, all professional soldiers, could overlook or misinterpret the meaning of events which placed the Army Corps in such a dangerous situation.

The explanation and pleading of Commandant Verge, attempting to rally the men behind their leadership, was of no avail. It became fatal for the National Council in Omsk to dismiss the mood of the troops of the First Division and act upon an advice of Rudolf Medek, a Council member stationed in Penza, in going ahead with the Archangelsk Project. Medek assessed the situation obtaining in Penza on May 20 in his letter to the Council in the following way:

"... The Archangelsk route is a problem. It will be difficult, but I think will work. Lenfeld returned from Moscow and brought us Archangelsk; at first the men would not even listen. The following slogan appeared on the passing trains: the National Council goes to Archangelsk we continue to Vladivostok. The confidence in the Council hit the lowest ebb; particularly Maxa's reputation suffered a great deal. But as the situation looks now the boys are slowly reconciling themselves to the inevitable..."¹²

It is hard to say why Medek so badly misread the feelings of the men of the First Division and what made him so optimistic. The troops, certainly, were not in such a frame of mind. Perhaps he did not know that the spokesmen of the First Division, the congress delegates assembled in Cheliabinsk for another round of consultations, had rejected the Archangelsk route five days earlier, on May 15.

Leaving the angry men in the trains in Penza the scene now shifted to Cheliabinsk, a town half way between Penza and Omsk, in which the last stage of the unfolding drama between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks was to be enacted.

BREACH IS IRREPARABLE

It was a mistake for the National Council not to consider

the mood of the troops of the First Division before espousing the Archangelsk project and before deputing Maxa, Cermak and Janik to Moscow on May 9 to negotiate the new arrangement with Trotsky; in fact, the failure caused the downfall of the National Council. To understand the Council's reasoning we have to appreciate that at that time the Council had its headquarters in Omsk, and that the mood of the troops in that city and, for that matter everywhere east of Omsk, differed markedly from the attitude of the troops around Penza regarding the Archangelsk project. The troops in Omsk and beyond were on the move for some time, and had to continue to Vladivostok in any event, even under the new arrangement. This then accounted for their relative calmness regarding the proposed division of the Army Corps. This was not so, however, with the troops around Penza who had not moved since March and, as we have seen, rocked with bitterness, discontent and open defiance of the Archangelsk route. The command of the First Division and the Divisional Soviet had even deputed Lenfeld to Moscow to impress upon Maxa, the French, and the Soviet Government their unanimous rejection of the Archangelsk route and their resolve to continue to Vladivostok.

It was a remarkable coincidence that exactly on the same day, May 15, when Maxa, Cermak and Janik conferred with Trotsky and committed the First Division to the Archangelsk route, the delegates of the First Division assembled in Cheliabinsk cast their verdict against it. The negative vote was the direct outcome of the spirit of rebellion simmering among the troops since the days of the Penza Agreement and marked the final break between the National Council and the troops. Until the Cheliabinsk consultations, which opened on May 15, the men of the First Division had reluctantly submitted to all orders and instructions of the National Council called for by the concessions to the Bolsheviks. The attempt of the Council to force upon the troops the Archangelsk project was, however, too much. The spirit of defiance could no longer be confined, and a rebellion broke open at a series of conferences of the delegates of the First and the Second Division held in Cheliabinsk in middle of May.

It will be remembered that the National Council had agreed, already on April 28, that the pre-congress conference would be

mered out before the two meetings opened on May 18. It was obvious to all that however luring the promise of the Bolsheviks to let the trains of the Second Division stationed between Omsk and Irkutsk proceed to Vladivostok, these trains must not fall into the ruse by removing themselves to that distant port. Without the assistance of precisely those trains, the First Division would remain landlocked in the heart of Russia and surrounded by hostile forces on all sides.

Although these separate meetings of the delegates of both divisions were preliminary to the main and joint conference, to open on May 20, the common decision regarding the Archangelsk project was of a momentous importance for further widening of the gulf between the National Council and the troops. In military parlance, the decision marked the opening stage of a mutiny against the National Council, the Allies and the Soviet Government.

An important question is why Maxa and his colleagues followed the policy of concessions to the dead end during their negotiations with the Allies on May 13 and Trotsky on May 15.

It seems that at the time of his negotiations with the French and Trotsky Maxa became aware that he was following a disastrous course. But he recoiled with horror anytime he began to contemplate a military solution of the impasse into which his well-meant policy had driven the Czechs. Under these conditions, the Allied-sponsored plan of divided transportation appeared a solution. Maxa worked hard now to escape his own responsibility for future developments by placing the responsibility upon the shoulders of the Allies, ardently hoping that once the issue of the exit of the Army Corps was taken out of the narrow context of Czech-Bolshevik relations and broadened by the participation of the Allies, the latter would secure, and even enforce, the performance of their arrangements with the Bolsheviks.

Maxa knew very well, when he negotiated with Trotsky on May 15, that the First Division had rejected the Archangelsk route. Lenfeld had told him so in Moscow before Maxa committed the First Division to the project during his interview with Trotsky. But his comforting feeling that the whole matter now rested in the hands of the Allies, and that the Allies would make the Soviet Government accelerate the trans-

port of the troops, made Maxa spurn Lenfeld's counsel. Maxa also hoped that with the assistance of the French he could quell the opposition of the troops who would not dare to rebel against them, particularly against orders of Marshal Foch.

In the final analysis then, the French must be blamed for Maxa's belief in the omnipotence of their influence upon the Soviet Government. It was General Lavergne who brushed aside all objections to the Archangelsk project and the well founded suspicion that the route was a trap, which had been explained to him on behalf of the First Division by Lenfeld. The French certainly knew their own limitations in dealing with the Bolsheviks. Lavergne, however, was obviously entrapped in the Archangelsk project and the instructions of Paris to get the troops out of Russia through the northern route. The Czechs must bend.

Thus the split within the Czech camp was unavoidable. It stemmed from two fundamentally different appraisals of the nature of Soviet policy towards them. While for the National Council the imaginary influence of the Allies upon the Bolsheviks now became a panacea, the troops believed that only their own armed strength could break the impasse. These were two different worlds and their ways parted in Cheliabinsk on May 15.

5

Conflict Is Inevitable

WHILE THE movement of the Czechoslovak Army Corps from the Volga basin to Vladivostok was not a smooth affair since the time of the conclusion of the Penza Agreement in March, nevertheless we have seen that the Soviet Government had remained committed until the end of April to the departure from Russia of this body; however, it had to reduce by the recruitment campaign of Strombach and his comrades from the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

The beginning of May marked, however, a turning point in the evolution of the policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs. The reason is that by that time a situation developed in which the government changed its mind about the first prong—the departure of a “handful of servants of capitalism” to which the recruitment campaign had hoped to reduce the Army Corps—and began to develop the potentialities inherent in the second prong to their maturity in order to detain in Russia the entire troops, even against their will.

Several factors favoured this significant shift in the policies of the Soviet Government at that time. In the first place was the fact that the movement of all trains of the Army Corps had been halted at the end of April, first upon request of Berlin and then of the Allies. Secondly, the over-all balance of power between the Army Corps and the Bolsheviks had shifted in

favour of the latter. The reason was that the Czech side had much dissipated its preponderant power through disarmament, dispersion of its trains, and the internal conflict within its ranks, while the Bolsheviks had much improved their military position through the recruitment of Internationalists into their armed forces. Third, the failure of the Czech Communists to bring into the Red Army the proletarian core of the Army Corps, and the manner in which the leftist opposition had been defeated at the Penza consultations and then at the public fiasco at the beginning of May, were totally unacceptable to the Soviet Government.

The reason was that the Soviet Government continued believing upon insistence of the Czech Communists, and this is the very root cause of the tragedy of the conflict, that the majority of the Army Corps did not want to go to France, and that the failure of their recruitment campaign and the defeat at the public fiasco had been due to manipulations of the troops by the political and military leaders who had prevented them from expressing their will freely. In these circumstances a forcible detention of the entire Army Corps was the only realistic and justified way in which to give a chance to its proletarian majority to join the Red Army, while those unwilling to join, particularly the bourgeois political and military leaders, would be detained against their will and in reciprocation for their terror and suppression of freedom of potential volunteers all this time. The entire organization of the Army Corps would collapse anyway as soon as deprived of its proletarian hard core. Wedded passionately to the proletarian internationalism as it was, the Soviet Government felt justified in dissolving the Army Corps at the cost of denying freedom to a "handful of servants of capitalism", instead of making a mistake on the other side of the spectrum by permitting this handful to deny freedom to the badly needed class allies by dragging them to France against their will.

It was against this background that during May the Soviet Government undertook a number of steps in order to develop the second prong to maturity and to a point at which it would be possible to detain the entire Army Corps in Russia.

In the first place, the hand of local military commanders was strengthened by Moscow ordering on May 20 all near-by

Soviets to dispatch their available manpower to the railway stations where the trains with the troops stood immobilized. The trains were encircled. In the second place, the *Cheka* arrested Maxa to extract from him a cable ordering the troops voluntarily to disarm and surrender to the protection of local Soviet forces. Maxa's order stated that there was no longer need for arms, because full responsibility for safety of the troops had been assumed by the Soviet Government. At the same time, a secret order of Trotsky and then Lenin went to all local Soviets instructing them to dissolve the Czech units as soon as they disarmed; the men were to be incorporated into the Red Army or formed in labour battalions. This was Trotsky's plan of *peaceful submission*. It was based upon an expectation that the obedience of the troops, and their loyalty to Maxa, could deliver them into the hands of the Bolsheviks without fighting. The Army Corps would expire in a dignified way.

The Czech side lagged far behind in preparations for the showdown. It lacked the correct diagnosis of intentions of the Soviet authorities, its military position had much deteriorated, and it suffered from a serious disagreement between the troops and their leaders. Under these adverse conditions it took some time for the men willing to act to forge a common front against the discredited leadership, reject the trap of the Archangelsk project and, finally, depose the National Council and place all authority into the hands of a Revolutionary Committee. The committee was empowered to renew the movement to Vladivostok in a peaceful manner. The Czechs would cease negotiating with the government in Moscow and, instead, press upon the local Soviets to persuade them to renew the movement of the trains; but no physical harm would be done to them. It was essentially a plan of *peaceful persuasion*.

It must be emphasized that neither party expected a large scale and protracted conflict to ensue when putting into effect its own scheme. Here and there small skirmishes might break out, but it was believed that these could be liquidated locally and before spilling all over to prevent a major conflagration. The Soviet authorities banked upon the proverbial obedience of the Czech troops and their subordination to their leaders in the hope that once the troops had disarmed themselves, upon Maxa's order, their dissolution would be an easy matter. Should

any resistance break out, then the local forces mobilized in the meantime would quell it.

The Revolutionary Committee of the Czechs expected, on the other hand, that once the Soviet Government were informed about the determination of the troops to renew the movement and the local Soviets invited to renew it under the threat of force, these would co-operate. Co-operation of only a few days was needed to get the trains out of the iron encirclement in Central Russia; the way beyond was open.

Both plans looked good on paper, but collapsed as soon as put to test. First to collapse was the scheme of Trotsky. When the troops refused to execute Maxa's cable to disarm, Trotsky ordered their forcible disarmament and dissolution under the penalty of shooting every Czech found with a rifle in hand.

The plan of the Czechs succeeded at least partially. Some local Soviets, notably the Soviet of Cheliabinsk, co-operated with them and renewed the movement. But as soon as Trotsky's order reached the Revolutionary Committee, this new leadership jettisoned the plan of peaceful persuasion and decided even to force the way to Vladivostok. Further loss of time would be fatal. The conflict thus became inevitable.

It was a hide-and-seek game when the Bolsheviks and the Czechs tried to outwit and outmanoeuvre each other during a brief spell of peaceful efforts to attain their objectives without resort to arms.

DECISION TO DISSOLVE THE ARMY CORPS

The defeat of the left opposition at the Penza consultations on April 27, and the public fiasco which the joint scheme of the Penza Bolsheviks and the Czech Communists had suffered on May 2, marked the turning point in the evolution of the policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs. It now became totally unacceptable to the Soviet Government to permit the National Council and the military command to take out of Russia the proletarian element of the Army Corps, which was badly needed for the formation of the nucleus of the Red Army. In view of this, appropriate measures were initiated to detain in the country if not the whole Army Corps, the troops east of

Omsk and those in Vladivostok seemed lost, than at least the First Division stranded around Penza and Cheliabinsk.

While Stalin and the Czechoslovak Bureau within his commissariat had been in charge of operations against the Army Corps until the collapse of propaganda work of the Czech Communists, after the public fiasco Trotsky and the Operational Department of his commissariat moved into the picture. Between May 5 and 12 Trotsky requested several times the local Soviets to forward information about the number, position and movement of the Czech forces and the whereabouts of their leaders, because his Department of Operations planned the final solution of the Czech Question.

One of the first measures introduced by the Soviet authorities, after the collapse of peaceful efforts of the Czech Communists, was an attempt to bring the troops to submission through starvation, particularly those located around Penza. The officer in charge of supplies for the whole First Division, J. Petras, voiced his concern over the critical situation in a letter sent from Kurgan to the National Council in Omsk on May 9. Petras reported that the entire supply arrangement, which had been worked out in March with the Siberian Co-operatives, collapsed due to restrictions which the Soviet authorities began to place upon the purchase and delivery of supplies. The situation in trains around Penza was very critical, and was further accentuated by the ban which the Soviet authorities placed even upon distribution of supplies already on hand. Telegrams frantically crying for food piled high on his desk. Originally, the Bolsheviks had permitted him to stock 7,000 puds of flour, but a few days later reduced this to 1,000. During his visit to the local Soviet, on May 8, the commissars threatened to confiscate even that amount in order to break the obstinate spirit of the troops through starvation. Petras warned the Council about the impending supply disaster and refused to take further responsibility under the prevailing conditions.¹

Other measures introduced by the Soviet authorities to break the morale of troops entailed secret instructions which called for arrest of officers, under any pretext, and for seizing hostages to assure that the Czechs undertook no hostile acts against the Soviet regime. These instructions did not apply to the well armed and compact group around Penza, here hunger was to

demoralize the troops, but concerned only the troops east of Omsk. There the individual trains stood alone, encircled by Bolshevik forces and far away from the main body of the Army Corps; the troops could be blackmailed into submission once officers and hostages were secured. Captain Voronov reported from Taiga to the National Council in Omsk on May 12 that the local Bolsheviks had received substantial reinforcements and that the Soviet planned to arrest him and his assistant, Lieutenant Vseticka, and take Dr. Sixt as a hostage. The plan then called for arrest of remaining officers and dissolution of the units; the men would be detained in the local prisoners of war camp and sorted out for potential volunteers for the Red Army. The action was to be precipitated by an ultimatum demanding an unconditional surrender of all arms. The National Council dealt with this report on May 15; it instructed Voronov not to surrender any arms and hostages which might be demanded by the Bolsheviks as an assurance that the Czechs contemplated no hostilities against them. Blackmail must not be submitted to at any cost.²

The instructions ordering the Soviets in Siberia to arrest officers and demand hostages must have been issued during first week of May, because on May 7 an attempt was made to arrest Captain Gajda and his assistant, Captain Kadlec, upon orders of the Soviet of Irkutsk. The Bolsheviks in Novonikolaievsk invited Gajda and Kadlec to appear in the office of the Railway Station Soviet on May 7. Kadlec brought with him two armed men and, as soon as the party entered the room the Bolsheviks ambushed them, declared them arrested and disarmed them. Gajda entered the room a minute later. Seeing the spectacle and hearing a commissar declaring him arrested, Gajda in a surprise move drew his pistol, which petrified the commissar and his men, and walked out of the room and ambush. He swiftly passed by the Red Guards who had their machine guns deployed at several points at the railway station and aimed at the trains of the Czechs; they were astonished and confused seeing Gajda walking out of the ambush unharmed. Gajda then armed his troops and upon an ultimatum secured the release of Kadlec and his guards. The Czechs later found out that the arrest of Gajda and Kadlec was to mark the beginning of an attack against them, and that the station had

been cleared of all traffic and public precisely for the purpose. With Gajda and Kadlec held as hostages, the troops were to be blackmailed into disarming themselves and then, at the point of machine guns, locked up in a camp.³

The well known "Cheliabinsk incident" belongs to the same category of attempts as the above one. A train with Russian refugees, the last three cars full of Hungarian prisoners of war, parked along a train with Czech troops at the Cheliabinsk station for some time without incident. But as soon as the train with the refugees began pulling out on May 14 a piece of iron was thrown out of it by a Hungarian, which hit one Czech soldier standing by. The man was badly injured, lost consciousness and almost rolled under the wheels of the moving train. His friends threw themselves upon the locomotive and stopped the train, seized all Hungarians and, upon identifying the culprit, lynched him. A free-for-all fight obscured the scene for a while until armed Czech guards restored order. The Bolshevik guards stood by, observing the scene with amazement. The Hungarians then boarded the train and departed.

The whole incident would have ended there and then if not for the Hungarian section of the local Battalion of Internationalists which, through its representative on the Executive Committee of Cheliabinsk Soviet, demanded an investigation and action against the Czechs. The local Soviet set up a three-man Investigation Commission, of which one member was a Hungarian. The commission invited the ten Czech guards, who on May 14 had dispersed the crowd, to appear in the office of the Soviet and arrested them as soon as they entered the premises on May 17. The Czech command then sent two delegates to intervene on behalf of the imprisoned men, but the commission arrested one of them as hostage. The Bolsheviks now held eleven Czechs.

As soon as the delegate returned and related the story about 3,000 Czech troops invaded the town on May 17 at 6 P.M., seized control of the streets, disarmed some Bolsheviks and lifted about 800 rifles from the Military Commissariat. The Soviet administration, however, was left functioning and its head, Commissar Sadlucky, who roamed among the Czechs in the streets, was assured that the action was not directed against the government but at securing the release of the unjustly

imprisoned eleven men. The Czech command assured Sadlucky of its willingness to give full satisfaction to the Soviet authorities and punish the men responsible for lynching the Hungarian; but the arrest of innocent men as hostages was an unjustified and high-handed act. Seeing the Czechs in complete control of the town and the enthusiastic acclaim which their action met on the part of the public, Sadlucky yielded and set the hostages free. The Czechs then began to sing folk songs, evacuated the city and returned to their trains.

Moscow received the highlights of this armed demonstration on May 17 at night and demanded a full report. This was communicated by Sadlucky to Trotsky's assistant Sadovkin sometime between May 18 and 20 (Document No. 7).⁴

While the experimentation with arrest of officers and hostages would indicate that the Soviet authorities were moving towards a showdown with the Czechs during the first half of May, the exact date of arriving at the final decision to liquidate the Army Corps can only be guessed. Although we know that the actual operational orders to that effect were to be issued on May 21, several pieces of evidence lead to the conclusion that the decision was reached around May 15 and possibly earlier. During the intervening period the local Soviets received instructions to undertake preparatory steps and wait for further orders from Moscow. Obviously, Trotsky and his staff worked hard during that time to figure out how the Czechs could be tackled best, which was not an easy problem. The Soviet authorities knew that any solution of the Czech question would have to entail two steps: first, complete disarmament of the troops; second, dissolution of their units and detention of the men in camps in order to sort them out politically.

In estimating that the decision to liquidate the Army Corps was reached around May 15 the first important point to remember is that the agreement of Maxa with Trotsky of that day was stillborn; none of the promises made by the War Commissar, to be executed under his personal orders at once, were fulfilled. The Soviet in Irkutsk had not been instructed to lift the ban on the movement of trains east of Omsk to Vladivostok, nor the Penza Soviet authorized to let the trains, concentrated around that city, proceed beyond Samara and Cheliabinsk and towards Perm. Since his return from Moscow on May 17, after

the interview with Trotsky, Lenfeld waited in vain in Penza for the transportation orders for the First Division which had been promised to him by the War Commissar.

This fact casts a cloud of suspicion upon the motives which prompted Trotsky to negotiate with Maxa the project of divided transportation on May 15. One cannot shake-off an impression that the decision to liquidate the Army Corps had been made earlier, and that the Czechs and the Allies were enticed into the negotiations on May 15 only to facilitate the design. Were Trotsky in earnest about his agreement with Maxa, there was no easier solution of the Czech problem than to let the trains between Omsk and Irkutsk proceed toward Vladivostok, and to order the concentration of the Penza group in the railway triangle Samara-Cheliabinsk-Perm. The Penza group had to wait there until the tonnage at the northern ports would be available. These were the terms of the agreement. But were the bargain of May 15 a trap, then it was imperative for Trotsky not to order the movement of trains as promised because this would scatter whatever concentration of forces the Bolsheviks had achieved on the anti-Czech front until then. First, the individual trains would be allowed to break through the local encirclement; second, it would be difficult for the Bolsheviks to achieve a similar concentration around the Czech troops in new localities. These considerations controlled the whole Czech-Bolshevik relation and, undoubtedly, guided Trotsky's hand in not issuing the transportation orders promised to Lenfeld and Maxa. The Czechs had to stay put.

The second important point to note in estimating the date on which the Soviet leaders decided to liquidate the Army Corps had to do with the convocation of the Army Congress. It will be remembered that the demand for the convocation of the congress was the heaviest piece of ammunition which the Communist propaganda was incessantly hurling at the National Council since February. But when the congress was finally convened after the public fiasco of May 2, the Soviet authorities laboured hard to prevent it. The Soviet in Cheliabinsk was under instructions not to permit the Czechs to hold such a meeting in the city. Furthermore, though Trotsky had promised to Maxa on May 15 that the Omsk Soviet would be instructed to dispatch the train of the National Council and

the Staff train to Cheliabinsk to enable the command and the political leadership to participate in the congress, such instructions never reached Omsk. In fact, the Omsk Soviet rejected all requests of the Council to let these trains proceed to Cheliabinsk. Under the new conditions the congress became plainly undesirable from the point of view of Moscow.

It is certain that the spirit of rebellion, which was gathering momentum among the troops since the beginning of April, did not escape attention of the local Soviets and was reported to Moscow. Moscow was well informed about the defeat of the left opposition at the Penza conference on April 27 precisely over the issue of the Army Corps remaining in Russia. The call for the removal of Maxa's leadership and for a forcible resumption of the movement towards Vladivostok, voiced by Cecek at the Penza consultations, and the public fiasco of May 2, undoubtedly convinced the men in the Department of Operations in Trotsky's Commissariat that the Czech issue was moving to a climax. It was obvious that the Czechs must be prevented from forging a united front; the Bolsheviks must not be deprived of the strategic advantage which they enjoyed in the widely dispersed trains which lacked a plan of concerted defence action. Hence the opposition to the congress, which could forge such a united front and co-ordinate the defence efforts of the Czechs.

The third piece of evidence which places the decision to dissolve the entire Army Corps and detain its troops in Russia well before middle of May is the fact that the central offices of the National Council in Moscow had been seized on May 11, whereby the Czechoslovak Communist Party attempted to assume its formal leadership over the troops.

The fourth piece of evidence, and from a very dependable source, is a report on the activities of the Czechoslovak Bureau within Stalin's Commissariat of National Affairs, which appeared on the pages of *Prukopnik* on May 17. The report disclosed that the Soviet Government was no more interested in volunteers for the Red force and that instead plans had been completed on the detention of the entire Army Corps in Russia, giving details on how the men would be used after the dissolution of their units. The report indicated that the Soviet Government planned in terms of permanent settlement

of all detained men in the country after conferring Russian citizenship upon them.

That the Soviet Government had changed its position with regard to the work of the Czechoslovak Communists from campaigning for volunteers to plans visualizing the dissolution of the Army Corps is corroborated by a report of F. Valenta, who had been ordered by the Army Command to join the Czechoslovak Red Army to undertake intelligence work. Valenta reported that around May 12 two leaders of the Czech Communists, A. Muna and F. Benes, arrived in Penza from Moscow in order to acquaint themselves with the situation and ascertain how the attack upon the Army Corps could be conducted most effectively. They told Valenta that the Soviet Government would not allow the troops out of Russia. The First Division would be transported to Archangelsk and on the way its troops starved into submission; they could save themselves by volunteering for the Red Army.⁵

Another evidence places the decision to dissolve the Army Corps definitely before May 17. According to this source the Military Commissar of Penza Soviet Ostrovsky and the Czech Communist Strombach, had received prior to May 17 detailed instructions concerning the steps to be undertaken against the troops of the Army Corps to put into effect a new policy of the Soviet Government. The leadership of the Army Corps learnt about these instructions two days later from a commander of one Red company, who maintained cordial relations with his friends in the Army Corps in spite of all differences and who himself had seen the instructions. This is the testimony of F. Erben, his friend from the Army Corps:

"... In the evening on May 19 our old friend, now a Commander in the Czech Red Army, called upon me and my friend Stary and requested us to follow him to his railroad car. After closing the door he declared that he had important information for us, which he would pass on only if promised complete discretion. He said: 'the question of your further existence is under review'. We gave him the requested assurance, upon which he said that Trotsky had already issued instructions calling first for the disarmament of our trains and then for the dissolution of our units. When

we questioned him whether he himself saw such instructions, he declared that he had been shown them by Strombach, before the latter left for Saratov, and also by the Military Commander of the Penza Soviet, Commissar Ostrovsky . . ."⁸

This is an important testimony, because Strombach left for Saratov on May 17. The exact nature of these instructions is not known. Most probably they ordered the local Soviets to take stock of the Czech forces and mobilize men and resources for an operation for which a signal would be given from Moscow later. It will be recalled that Sadlucky had alluded to such instructions in his report about the Cheliabinsk incident to Trotsky's assistant Sadovkin between May 18 and 20. Sadlucky said that according to the Yekaterinburg Soviet the instructions calling for disarmament of the Czech troops should not be executed for the moment because of the lack of adequate forces and that further orders would be forthcoming from Moscow. That such instructions existed is confirmed also from Omsk. Here the Chairman of Omsk Soviet, Commissar Kozyrev, and the Chairman of the Soviet's Military Commission, Commander Furtsov, told a Czech delegation of Kudela, Glos and F. Clupek, who came to see the commissars upon their invitation on May 20, that the Soviet had definite instructions regarding the Czechs but could not reveal them for the time being.⁹

Whatever the exact nature of these instructions, the assumption that they called for mobilization of manpower and resources to disarm the Czechs and then dissolve their units is not far from the truth. The official newspaper of Stalin's Commissariat of National Affairs, *Zhizn natsionalnosti*, reported that on May 20 the Soviet Government had directed agitators and military reinforcements from all Russia to the centres in which the Czechs stood immobilized—Penza, Samara and Irkutsk—and that the men were under Trotsky's order to disarm their troops.¹⁰ Also the Battalions of Internationalists began to converge from distant places upon those railway stations approximately at that time to strengthen the hand of the local Bolsheviks.¹¹

While the decision to liquidate the Army Corps had been made around May 15, or perhaps earlier, the actual signal to strike did not arrive until May 21. The Czech Question was

a formidable one and, undoubtedly, its solution taxed imagination and craft of the Soviet leaders during the intervening week. The experiment to subdue the disarmed trains east of Penza, through arrest of officers and extraction of hostages, had miserably failed; so had the efforts to bring to knees, through starvation, the well armed and compact army group around Penza. Both these tactics badly misfired and made the men, horrified at a prospect of being starved out and then disarmed, to press even more frantically for a forward movement to break through the impasse. These two failures, experienced during first half of May, pointed out that an entirely new approach to the Czech Question was needed and that improvisations and half-measures would not do. It became increasingly evident that the Czechs could be subdued either by a sudden armed thrust against the individual trains and isolated army groups concentrated at several larger railway stations, or through a stratagem.

The problem facing the staff in the Department of Operations in Trotsky's Commissariat around May 20 entailed three major questions. The first question was how the Czechs could be told that the government had changed its mind about their departure and that they should reconcile themselves to the idea of staying in Russia. It was impossible for the Soviet Government to renounce publicly its obligations under the agreement on May 15, its fresh declarations of friendship and goodwill, and the promises given to Maxa and Lensfeld. This might provoke the Czechs into an uprising. The second question had to do with the manner in which they could be made to stay in Russia; this entailed either a voluntary or forcible disarmament and then dissolution of their units. The third question was a crucial one and concerned the relative strength, fire power and strategic position of both parties. The Soviet leaders were justified in hoping that their forces, concentrated during the mobilization drive in the stations between Omsk and Irkutsk, would be sufficient to tackle the 3,800 almost completely disarmed and widely dispersed troops. Here geography heavily favoured the Bolsheviki. But the real question was how to handle a similarly disarmed but a fairly well concentrated group of 8,800 men around Cheliabinsk, and still worse, the Penza-Samara group of 8,000 men armed to teeth west of Penza.

The mobilization drive which the government was pursuing during April and May indicated that the concentration of the Bolshevik forces achieved in Penza, Samara and Cheliabinsk on May 20, though spectacular compared with the sorry state of their forces at the end of March, left much to be desired to match the manpower of the Czechs. True, the Czech troops in Samara and Cheliabinsk had only 15 rifles per train, but this disadvantage would vanish as soon as they seized the considerable supply of weapons and ammunition stored there. Thus in purely military terms the problem of disarming and dissolving the Czech troops was far beyond the number of troops available to the Bolsheviks in Penza, Samara and Cheliabinsk on May 20. The problem defied a solution until a fresh concentration of the Bolshevik forces, mounted on that day, would augment the manpower of the Soviets in these crucial places.

But the time element further complicated this strategic picture. The Bolsheviks found themselves under the compulsion of striking first, and well in advance, before the National Council would begin to press for execution of the new transportation arrangements under the agreement of Maxa with Trotsky of May 15. Trotsky and his men were well aware that their time was running out, and that they could procrastinate no longer in searching for a solution. Any further delay in execution of Trotsky's promises to Maxa would undoubtedly make the Czechs resort to extreme measures of self-help, perhaps even making them strike first. This was precisely the warning which Sadlucky had cabled to Trotsky in his report about the Cheliabinsk incident:

"... I was told by the Czech leaders that the troops are restless to the point of rebellion because instead of being transported to Vladivostok by us, this was the promise of the Soviet Government, we are detaining them in Russia . . . It is absolutely necessary to transfer the Czechs to Siberia; the long delay in the movement of their trains, lasting already for several months, and the uncertainty whether they will be transported at all, could in the end provoke a powerful rebellion . . . And to cross arms with the Czechs now, before the uprising of the Cossacks is liquidated, would be fatal . . ."¹⁰

Then two Czech Communist leaders, A. Muna and F. Knofliceck, appeared in jail with the text of a telegram and requested Maxa and Cermak to sign it. It was issued in the name of the National Council and ordered all troops immediately to disarm to prevent repetition of such incidents; in exchange for disarmament the troops were to submit to the Soviet authorities and accept their protection. Maxa refused to sign for it was absurd for the Czech Communists to deal on behalf of the Soviet Government; he must hear directly from Trotsky about the Cheliabinsk incident and the new demands which the government wanted to impose upon him.

Maxa was then connected with Trotsky over the telephone. What exactly was exchanged is not known but it appears that he was hammered into submission by the War Commissar. From evidence given by Maxa to some of his colleagues while in jail it appears that Trotsky, in a blistering attack, made the National Council, and Maxa personally, responsible for the Cheliabinsk incident and threatened to court-martial and then shoot him. Though Trotsky had in hand Sadlucky's report about the incident in Cheliabinsk and knew well that it had been precipitated by the arrest of eleven Czech soldiers, the commissar portrayed a picture which Maxa dreaded most: that the troops had staged an anti-Bolshevik uprising, seized the city and deposed the local Soviet. Maxa had always recoiled at such a thought for he was convinced, contrary to views held by the troops, that this would involve them in a fight in Russia and ruin their hope of ever seeing France. As one of his arrested colleagues later reported, "not knowing what was the truth about the Cheliabinsk events and what Trotsky's blackmail", Maxa signed the death warrant of the Army Corps and attached the seal of the National Council to it which he had with him. Cermak also protested, but signed for the same reason as Maxa. He warned his captors, however, that such an order the Army Corps would never execute even if signed and sealed by the Presidium of the National Council, which he and Maxa represented.¹³

The death sentence for the troops, extracted by Trotsky from Maxa and Cermak through blackmail and extortion, had undoubtedly been drafted in the Operations Department. It read:

credit side, however, Gajda had already seized a large section of the Omsk-Irkutsk line, and Hanus controlled several stations on the Omsk-Cheliabinsk line. The events were rapidly moving ahead during the last day, and it became apparant that the Cheliabinsk group, the middle one, must begin its operations eastwards in order to give assistance to Hanus so that he might take Omsk and effect a junction with Gajda. It appeared imperative for the Cheliabinsk group to begin operations also in the westward direction, towards Ufa, Samara and Penza, for it was conceivable that the Penza group would start its eastward march soon. The Cheliabinsk group would thus function as a bridge, linking the western and the eastern flanks of the train column.

The task was enormous. From Cheliabinsk to Novonikolaievsk in the east it was 880 miles, and to Penza in the west 858 miles. True, the local Soviet co-operated with the Czechs and permitted two trains to arrive to, and to depart from, Cheliabinsk every day. But this was nothing in view of the tasks ahead. Moreover, it appeared doubtful whether the Cheliabinsk Soviet could condone a punitive expedition of Hanus against the Omsk comrades, and the extension of Czech control over the railway line towards Penza. On the top of this, it was not certain what the Cheliabinsk Soviet would do, it had about 2,000 troops, after the Czechs had thinned out their forces from the city in order to extend their control over hundreds of miles of the railway track towards Omsk and Penza. It was entirely conceivable that as soon as the bulk of their forces left the city the Bolsheviks would strike and cut the group in two parts. The loss of Cheliabinsk, the pivotal position between Penza and Novonikolaievsk, would be a serious blow hard to recover from. All these considerations led the Czech Command to a conclusion that it must assume control over Cheliabinsk railway station, and that the Red Army in the city must be disarmed as a security measure. The Soviet, however, would be left functioning.

Barely this decision was arrived at when Czech telegraphists, who were tapping the telegraph and telephone lines of the local Soviet for some time, appeared with the text of a cable which the Soviet just received from Yekaterinburg:

the much superior Czech forces, and to make them drop objections to further movement of their trains.

Then a member of Cheliabinsk Military Commission, Commissar Krymov, spoke to Anunchin. He reiterated all arguments of Kobelianko and warned that the fast deteriorating supply situation of the Czechs was an additional and important reason of why their movement into Siberia should not be opposed. For the Czechs Pavlu informed Anunchin that the new Czech leadership was acting under instructions of the congress, and that all orders issued by the National Council and Maxa were invalid. Until then the Czechs maintained strict neutrality; but the Soviet Government had already been warned that any attempt to hinder the movement of the trains would be resisted by force. The Bolsheviks must be held responsible for all consequences.

Both Kobelianko and Krymov, and also Pavlu, pleaded with Anunchin in vain; he was under the influence, and possibly orders, of Omsk. Anunchin bluntly said that the Czechs themselves were to blame for the existing situation. They simply refused to disarm. The National Council and the Soviet Government had concluded such a disarmament agreement and Maxa had issued an appropriate order (this referred to Maxa's disarmament order extracted from him in jail on May 21, *Ed.*). As far as Anunchin could remember, Maxa's order called for complete disarmament of all troops; whoever refused to disarm was to be considered a rebel against the Soviet Government. As far as he was concerned, the decisions of the congress were invalid. There was no need for setting up of a mixed commission to negotiate with the Czechs. There was only one solution to the existing impasse: the Czechs must disarm at once. Pavlu attempted to argue with Anunchin, but the Commissar snapped back that "it is clear that you do not understand; any further conversation would be waste of time . . ." ⁹⁷

The Czech command dealt with the new situation in the evening of May 26. Anunchin's attitude was an eye opener which shattered to pieces the hope that the Cheliabinsk Soviet would be able to convince the other Soviets to listen to reason and emulate Cheliabinsk in co-operating with the Czechs. Now all peaceful approaches to Omsk were closed by the hostile attitude of the Omsk and the Yekaterinburg Bolsheviks. On the

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Both Kobelianko and Krymov, and also Pavlu, pleaded with Anunchin in vain; he was under the influence, and possibly orders, of Omsk. Anunchin bluntly said that the Czechs themselves were to blame for the existing situation. They simply refused to disarm. The National Council and the Soviet Government had concluded such a disarmament agreement and Maxa had issued an appropriate order (this referred to Maxa's disarmament order extracted from him in jail on May 21, *Ed.*). As far as Anunchin could remember, Maxa's order called for complete disarmament of all troops; whoever refused to disarm was to be considered a rebel against the Soviet Government. As far as he was concerned, the decisions of the congress were invalid. There was no need for setting up of a mixed commission to negotiate with the Czechs. There was only one solution to the existing impasse: the Czechs must disarm at once. Pavlu attempted to argue with Anunchin, but the Commissar snapped back that "it is clear that you do not understand; any further conversation would be waste of time . . ." ⁹⁷

The Czech command dealt with the new situation in the evening of May 26. Anunchin's attitude was an eye opener which shattered to pieces the hope that the Cheliabinsk Soviet would be able to convince the other Soviets to listen to reason and emulate Cheliabinsk in co-operating with the Czechs. Now all peaceful approaches to Omsk were closed by the hostile attitude of the Omsk and the Yekaterinburg Bolsheviki. On the

credit side, however, Gajda had already seized a large section of the Omsk-Irkutsk line, and Hanus controlled several stations on the Omsk-Cheliabinsk line. The events were rapidly moving ahead during the last day, and it became apparant that the Cheliabinsk group, the middle one, must begin its operations eastwards in order to give assistance to Hanus so that he might take Omsk and effect a junction with Gajda. It appeared imperative for the Cheliabinsk group to begin operations also in the westward direction, towards Ufa, Samara and Penza, for it was conceivable that the Penza group would start its eastward march soon. The Cheliabinsk group would thus function as a bridge, linking the western and the eastern flanks of the train column.

The task was enormous. From Cheliabinsk to Novonikolaievsk in the east it was 880 miles, and to Penza in the west 858 miles. True, the local Soviet co-operated with the Czechs and permitted two trains to arrive to, and to depart from, Cheliabinsk every day. But this was nothing in view of the tasks ahead. Moreover, it appeared doubtful whether the Cheliabinsk Soviet could condone a punitive expedition of Hanus against the Omsk comrades, and the extension of Czech control over the railway line towards Penza. On the top of this, it was not certain what the Cheliabinsk Soviet would do, it had about 2,000 troops, after the Czechs had thinned out their forces from the city in order to extend their control over hundreds of miles of the railway track towards Omsk and Penza. It was entirely conceivable that as soon as the bulk of their forces left the city the Bolsheviks would strike and cut the group in two parts. The loss of Cheliabinsk, the pivotal position between Penza and Novonikolaievsk, would be a serious blow hard to recover from. All these considerations led the Czech Command to a conclusion that it must assume control over Cheliabinsk railway station, and that the Red Army in the city must be disarmed as a security measure. The Soviet, however, would be left functioning.

Barely this decision was arrived at when Czech telegraphists, who were tapping the telegraph and telephone lines of the local Soviet for some time, appeared with the text of a cable which the Soviet just received from Yekaterinburg:

"May 26. Very urgent. To the Military Commissar of the Cheliabinsk Soviet, Commander Sadlucky. Undertake all preliminary steps needed for the execution of Trotsky's order No. 388. Strong reinforcements on their way to you from Yekaterinburg and Ufa. Military Commissar Anun-chin."⁹⁸

It was highest time for the Czechs to move. Soon reinforcements would be converging upon the city from two directions: from the north—Yekaterinburg; and from the west—Ufa. Upon receiving this information Vojtechovsky prepared a plan of attack. The operation was to be executed under the command of Lieutenant M. Cila; the zero hour was set at 1.30 A.M. May 27. The Third Battalion of the Second Regiment, about 250 men, under command of Lieutenant Hajda, marched all night, encircled the city from the north and struck at the Bolshevik military barracks in early hours. The guards abandoned their positions and four machine guns without a shot. This opened the way for a peaceful conquest. Later here and there some stray shots were fired, but the entire Bolshevik army, about 2,000 men, caught in underwear, surrendered. There was a considerable number of Internationalists among them. The troops captured also over 4,000 German and Hungarian prisoners of war. The Czechs had no losses; the Bolsheviks one. The operations in rest of the city and at the railway station went also smoothly; there were no losses whatsoever. The war booty was enormous: 11 field pieces, a number of automobiles, several hundred machine guns, thousands of rifles, and a great supply of hand grenades and ammunition.⁹⁹ Vojtechovsky could arm his men to teeth before sending them out of Cheliabinsk towards Omsk and Penza.

The conquest was so quietly executed during the night that many people awoke in the morning without knowing what really had happened overnight. They learnt about the big change from posters of the PEC, which appeared in all public places early morning of May 27:

"... In view of the danger of being slaughtered like sheep we had to resort to arms. The Czechoslovaks answered the Soviet Government's declaration of war by a thrust whereby

all stations from Cheliabinsk to Irkutsk, except Omsk, have fallen into their hands . . . The military power of the local Soviets, consisting mainly of German and Austro-Hungarian mercenaries, is broken . . . The local Soviets have, however, been left functioning. All citizens enjoy full civil liberties. The Czechoslovaks do not wish to interfere in internal affairs of the Russian people. The aim of their operations was to secure themselves against attacks of foreign mercenaries in the service of the Bolsheviks who, under the pretext of internationalism, threaten to seize the *Magistral*. We also helped the Russian working people to regain their freedom. Be it emphatically stated that our aim is not to take the government in Siberia into our hands; this is for the Russian people to do.

Citizens! In places under our control we guarantee full enjoyment of all civil liberties . . . Avail yourselves of these liberties . . . but do not abuse them. Propagate freely your ideas, but abstain from violence. All activities promoting civil conflicts and pogroms, and the like, will be punished. Where the Czechoslovak soldier assumed the protection of civil liberties, law and order must prevail. We cannot stay in Russia long, and shall depart as soon as our trains from the west pass through here. You are masters of your own affairs, but law and order and freedom of every individual must be preserved . . ."¹⁰⁰

Unlike in Novonikolaievsk, the members of the Cheliabinsk Soviet did not disappear during the seizure of the city and after the disarmament of the Red Army. The building housing the City and the Uiezd Soviets was left intact; moreover, these Soviets were permitted to retain a platoon of armed Bakshirs, all Mohammedans, to protect the building and as a personal body guard to their members. In the morning of May 27 the Soviet of the Uiezd issued the following declaration:

"Citizens! On May 27 the Czechoslovaks resorted to arms in order to secure their free movement towards Vladivostok, and from there to France. All orders of the Soviet administration regulating the life in the city, as well as in the whole Uiezd, retain full force of law. While publically informing

the population about the above, the Executive Committee of the Soviet appeals to all citizens to preserve law and order. It warns that all attempts to confuse the masses by spreading false reports will be suppressed. The Executive Committee of the Soviet of the Cheliabinsk Uiezd."¹⁰¹

Being now in control of the Cheliabinsk railway station and the entire communication system, the Czech Command, in co-operation with the Soviet, made one more attempt at renewing the movement of its trains towards Omsk *via* Yekaterinburg. The Czechs and the Bolsheviks agreed to send one delegate to Yekaterinburg to explain the whole situation to the local Soviet and convince Anunchin about the futility of his efforts at keeping the Czechs immobilized. If Yekaterinburg would not co-operate with the Czechs, then they would undertake military operations against it to free their way. On May 27 the Czech Command dispatched to Yekaterinburg one officer, Piffel, with a request for Anunchin demanding his co-operation. He also had a letter from the Cheliabinsk Soviet fully endorsing this demand; the letter further stated that the delegate should be well treated, for the Soviet guaranteed his personal safety. Though Piffel was well received, the negotiations proved abortive.¹⁰² The Soviet stood under the influence of Omsk and repeated the same charges against the Czechs which its Military Commissar Anunchin had already told to Pavlu on May 26 over the telephone.

Hardly could it have been otherwise. Shortly before Piffel arrived in Yekaterinburg the Soviet had received from Omsk the following communication:

"Omsk. May 27. The Cheliabinsk Soviet concluded an agreement with the Staff of the Czechoslovak army permitting 8,000 armed men to advance upon Omsk. In Izil-Kul there are 1,000 Czech troops, and another 1,000 in Marianovka. The Bardaush Soviet informed us that the Soviet in Novonikolaievsk was imprisoned. The Government in Novonikolaievsk was assumed by Siberian Oblastniky, headed by Sazonov. The Cheliabinsk Soviet dispatched telegrams in all directions urging the Soviets not to hinder the movement of the Czechs. The telegrams were signed by

Major Guinet for the French Mission, and by the Chief of the Army Corps.

We, however, request all Soviets to execute Trotsky's order without delay, and in every way to hinder the movement of Czech trains, even by dismantling the line. Our troops protecting the western approaches to Omsk are deployed at the Tatianovce station about 50 versts from Omsk. Another group was dispatched to the east, to the Tatarskaia station, to assist Kansk. Schlichter, and his Latvian Guard, was released by the Czechs. He arrived in Omsk accompanied by troops of the Izil-Kul Soviet. The armistice expires at 12 o'clock. Schlichter conducts all negotiations with the Czechs. The situation is very serious. Our connection with the Soviet of the Centro-Sibir (in *Irkutsk, Ed.*) is already cut off. Soon we shall lose contact even with you . . . Send armed trains. The Soviet decided to defend Omsk to the very last man . . . All workers in town are armed . . . Chairman of Military Staff of the Soviet of Western Siberia, A. Akulov."¹⁰²

It will be recalled that Moscow made Omsk the centre of its operations against the Czechs. This cable indicates that the Omsk Bolsheviks went about their task with zeal, and that they deployed their forces in two directions, anticipating a two front war.

Meanwhile, in Cheliabinsk, co-operation between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks began to deteriorate. First the Bolsheviks cooled off towards the Czechs and, being deprived of military power, resorted to subterfuge to undermine their efforts. In the building of the Soviet, which was left under their exclusive control, the Bolsheviks conspired against the Czechs. During a series of conferences with Bolshevik labour leaders a plan was worked out whereby the railway technicians, and other workers essential for the movement of trains, would present the Czech Command with extreme demands and then would go on strike to bring their movement to a halt. These labour leaders then began to agitate among workers, blackmailing them into going on strike under the threat of incurring a severe punishment as soon as the Czechs left the city and the Bolsheviks regained control. But the plan failed, because great majority of workers

sympathized with the Czechs and enthusiastically worked for them.

In order to protect the workers against Bolshevik threats the trade unions hit back. The trade unions approached the Czech Command with resolutions condemning agitation in labour ranks, requesting the Czechs to declare that their transportation orders must be executed unconditionally, and that anyone refusing to do so, or striking against the Czechs, would be shot. The Command issued such a declaration, and this then settled the tussle on the labour front.¹⁰⁴

Far more injurious proved clandestine mobilization efforts of the Cheliabinsk Soviet. Its agents secretly organized a workers militia in factories, and parties of agitators were dispatched to the near-by towns and villages to organize raids upon Czech positions. In a number of places the railway line was dismantled, and instances of sabotage became daily occurrences. On May 29 the Czech troops arrested in one village the Chairman of Cheliabinsk Gubernial Soviet, Commissar Vasenko, who in disguise of a flour mill worker was organizing and then leading raiding parties upon Czech positions and sabotaging the railway line.

The situation in Cheliabinsk, due to the subversive work of the Soviet, became untenable soon. Also intelligence reports indicated that the Bolshevik forces began to converge upon Cheliabinsk along the railway lines from the north *via* Yekaterinburg, the west *via* Ufa, and the south *via* Troitsk. In fact, a number of small engagements had already been fought all around the city. The continuous subversive activity of Cheliabinsk Soviet and its co-operation with the Bolsheviks from outside in harassing the Czechs prompted the PEC and the Command to disarm the Red Army unit guarding the building of the Soviet during the night from May 31 to June 1, imprison all members of the Soviet who could be reached and declare the Soviet divested of all authority. The Czechs assumed military control over the city. The uneasy peace came to the end.

Fall of Soviet Power in Siberia

By the time the Command decided to depose the Cheliabinsk Soviet its trains rolled towards a series of encounters with the

Bolsheviks in all directions: in the west in the Volga basin, in the east around Irkutsk, in the north around Yekaterinburg, and in the south around Saratov and Orenburg. The conflict fanned out in all directions from the Trans-Siberian line. The strategic problems the Czechs faced were enormous. A glance at the map shows the following deployment of their forces. On the western flank, based upon Samara, operated a group of 8,000 men under command of Lieutenant Cecek. Further east, about 900 miles, operated a group of Colonel Vojtechovsky of 8,800 men; this was based upon Cheliabinsk. Further to the east, about 1,100 miles, Captain Gajda operated with his 2,780 troops; this group was based upon Novonikolaievsk. Further to the east, about 500 miles, operated Colonel Ushakov with his 1,050 men; he was based upon Kansk Yeniseiskii. Further to the east, 1,500 miles as the crow flies, operated the Vladivostok group of 13,500 men. There was a span of 5,000 miles separating the troops in the Volga basin from those in Vladivostok.

The fighting was fearsome, the odds awesome. The Bolshevik forces in the Volga basin drew upon the resources of the entire European Russia, and Trotsky personally directed the campaign in this region; about 40 per cent of his force was composed of nationals of the Central Powers. He was also directly assisted by Berlin with technicians and specialists. The Bolsheviks fighting the Cheliabinsk group drew upon the manpower from forces which had originally been assembled against General Dutov in the triangle Yekaterinburg-Troitsk-Verchnie Uinsk, and upon prisoners of war who had been concentrated in the region Yekaterinburg-Perm-Viatka, prior to their repatriation to Germany and Austria. Here the percentage of foreign nationals in the Red forces came close to 60 per cent. Further east, around Irkutsk and Lake Baikal, Gajda and Ushakov fought an enemy whose units were composed up to 90 per cent of nationals of the Central Powers; some battalions and companies were purely German or Hungarian in their composition. Also the Vladivostok group fought against the Red forces composed in their majority of prisoners of war.

In spite of these heavy odds the Czechs went from victory to victory. Novonikolaievsk was captured on May 26, Penza May 29, Cheliabinsk May 31, Samara June 8, Omsk June 7, Yekaterinburg June 25, Vladivostok June 29, Irkutsk July 11,

for the Council members, and prudence called for a quiet retreat. No attempt was made to defend or explain the past policies of the Council. Under these conditions the conflict of loyalties distressing the Council members was solved; they submitted to the mandate of the troops and declared willingness to go along with the proposed changes in policies and leadership.

It was a quiet revolution which buried the National Council; the impersonal and matter-of-fact handling of the affair by the spokesmen for the troops achieved a complete success. The meeting then decided that the Army Corps Congress would be held in Cheliabinsk, the first plenary session to open in the afternoon, to consummate the transfer of power and map out further steps to implement the decision concerning the immediate but peaceful resumption of transportation to Vladivostok.²³ This meeting thus inaugurated a pacific phase of the Czech efforts to achieve their objective; the militant phase set in later, after these efforts failed.

The first plenary meeting of the congress opened in the afternoon of May 20. The register of the Mandate Commission shows that 123 delegates participated, 119 having full voting privileges.²⁴ The oldest delegate present, V. Plesky, was accorded the honour of opening the congress, welcoming the delegates and presiding over election of the Congress Presidium. The assembly elected F. Maisner to the Chair; A. Pysvejc its Vice-Chairman; and A. Vancura and J. Hrbek its Secretaries. As soon as the newly elected presidium took over, Plesky moved that the congress should at once deal with the problem of transportation to France and requested the members of the National Council to submit their programme in this respect. The congress was the highest authority binding all Czechoslovaks in Russia, including the Council, said Plesky. His reference to the National Council threw the meeting in uproar; the chairman, however, stepped in and declared that this problem had been dealt with at a special session held in the morning and that B. Pavlu had been authorized to report to the congress on behalf of the group which met in the morning.²⁵

As Pavlu, member of the defunct Council, slowly walked to the rostrum the delegates assembled in the large dining hall of the Cheliabinsk railway station froze into distrustful silence.

Pavlu first conveyed greetings of his colleagues and explained cautiously why the congress had several times been postponed. He said that it was now being convened in Cheliabinsk precisely to give the delegates the opportunity to decide how the existing impasse in transportation should be solved. The fate of the Army Corps rested in the hands of the men assembled in the room. Because time was the most important element at play, the congress must act immediately. Pavlu then suggested, as had been agreed upon in the morning, that the congress should elect a Provisional Executive Committee to assume responsibility for an immediate renewal of the movement of the entire Army Corps to Vladivostok, to be executed through any measures promising results. The Provisional Executive Committee (further PEC) should consist of four members of the National Council present in Cheliabinsk; the commanders of the Third, Fourth and Seventh Regiments; and four congress delegates, two for each division. This eleven-member body would exercise the supreme authority in all matters concerning the departure of the Army Corps from Russia and would be responsible only to the congress; it could call upon military, transportation and other experts for professional opinion; its meetings would be confidential. Pavlu suggested that any member of the defunct Council making his way to Cheliabinsk should be co-opted, with full voting privileges, into this new revolutionary organ to maintain some form of legal continuity. Regarding the port of departure from Russia, Pavlu informed the delegates that the morning conference had rejected Archangelsk and that the entire Army Corps would proceed to Vladivostok as originally agreed upon with the Soviet Government.

Seeing the complete submission of the Council members to the will of the troops the delegates enthusiastically welcomed Pavlu's proposal concerning the formation of the PEC, and Vladivostok as a port of departure from Russia, but defeated his suggestion concerning the co-option of any Council members into the PEC who might appear in Cheliabinsk. Instead, the congress approved Cecek's motion to the effect that any such Council member could participate in the meetings of the PEC, but without voting privileges.²⁶

The congress elected the following delegates into the PEC:

for the National Council J. David, B. Pavlu, F. Richter and B. Zavada; for the military command Lieutenant Cecek, Captain Gajda and Colonel Vojtechovsky; for the troops of the First Division V. Rocek and J. Bem; for the Second Division V. Plesky and J. Sotolar. The three military commanders formed a Military Collegium, to assume responsibility for planning and execution of technical and military aspects of the decisions made by the PEC.

The smooth working of the congress was interrupted by intelligence reports received by the Military Collegium in the meantime. Several commanders of the trains on the *Magistral* reported that the Soviet Government had been carrying out a secret mobilization of forces and their concentration in the stations in which their trains stood. Though unfriendly activities against some trains had been resorted to by the Bolsheviks since beginning of May, the new reports indicated that now the Soviet Government was preparing for a concerted and a large scale effort against the Army Corps.

The counter-measures were decided upon by the PEC at once. First, a cable was approved, to be sent to the National Council in Paris through the French Embassy in Vologda, to inform it about the new situation so that appropriate steps could be taken with the French Government. The cable conveyed a pledge of loyalty and declared that the congress had unanimously rejected Archangelsk as the port of departure for the First Division.²⁷ The PEC further planned measures to secure the Cheliabinsk congress against any attempts of the Bolsheviks to disperse it. The congress was unwanted by the Soviet Government, and it was conceivable that an attempt might be made to prevent the Czechs from forging a united front and working out a concerted plan of defence. The debate in the PEC focused upon technical aspects of a peaceful resumption of the movement to the Far East, and then on military aspects should it prove necessary to renew the movement forcibly in last resort, and then reviewed special circumstance which would govern military operations in Penza, Cheliabinsk, Omsk and Irkutsk.²⁸ At the end of a long day a shadow of a plan thus emerged whereby the Czechs hoped to resume the movement of their trains without serious complications through co-operation with the local Soviets.

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The second plenary session of the congress was held in the morning of May 22 and dealt with a number of administrative matters. The Chairman of the PEC, Pavlu, placed upon the table a draft of procedural rules to govern the deliberations and voting of the congress and a proposal concerning its agenda, and then embarked upon a long *expose* explaining the international standing and legal position of the Army Corps in Russia. The second part of this plenary session was held in the afternoon. It was interrupted by a pleasant event which went a long way in pacifying the strained Czech-Bolshevik relations in Cheliabinsk: a delegation of the Cheliabinsk Soviet made an appearance in the hall. The congress accorded a cordial welcome to the Bolshevik leaders and, with rapt attention, listened to a speech of its Military Commissar Sadlucky.

The commissar greeted the congress and explained in a friendly manner why the local Soviet had to declare martial law following the occupation of the city by the Czechs on May 17, and why the Czech-Bolshevik relations had deteriorated. The Soviet would like to liquidate the whole Cheliabinsk incident; the purpose of his visit was to work out, together with the Czechs, a way whereby the weapons seized on May 17 could be returned. The second member of the delegation explained why the Bolsheviks had to conclude the peace of Brest-Litovsk. The third member, an employee of the Railway Administration, assured the Czechs that the difficulties they had experienced until then were of no local doing.

The Czech view of the Cheliabinsk incident was put forth by F. Polak and V. Smolka. These men explained why the troops had been compelled to march upon the city and then warned that although they did not wish to interfere in Russian domestic affairs the congress had resolved to get the Army Corps out of the country through Vladivostok at any price. Then F. Kotr made a gesture which visibly pleased both the Bolsheviks and the assembled men. He said that in spite of all the difficulties which the troops had experienced, the congress was thankful to the railway workers for all services rendered so far. The statement was acclaimed by cheers on both sides and paved the way for reconciliation. To investigate all matters connected with the Cheliabinsk incident and settle the question of returning the seized weapons, Cecek proposed formation of

a six-member mixed commission. Sadlucky accepted the proposal, and the congress elected F. Polak, M. Cila and V. Smolka to represent the Czech side.

Sadlucky then boldly declared that an end must be put to the strained Czech-Bolshevik relations, and that he himself would telegraph to Moscow a proposal how to solve all outstanding problems. Until he received the government's response to his proposal, the final settlement should be postponed. The visit of the Bolsheviks, and their conciliatory tone, created an atmosphere of amity and their departure was friendly acclaimed.

The second plenary session adjourned with a decision to dispatch couriers to all trains with a report on the results of the congress: (a) Archangelsk route was rejected; (b) new leadership was placed in charge of the movement to Vladivostok; (c) this would commence under the management of the Czechs themselves.²⁹

The visit of Commissar Sadlucky, and the spirit of friendship and reconciliation which he conveyed, had a profound effect upon the thinking of the Military Collegium because it corroborated its basic assumption that in co-operation with the local Soviets it would be possible to renew the movement to Vladivostok. This is how the Military Collegium saw the picture.

In the first place, it was a tiresome business for the local Soviets to be continuously pitched against the Czechs, and it was certain that they would like to have them disappear from sight. Confronted with their much superior force, which was a source of inspiration and hope for local anti-Bolshevik element, the Soviets dealt with this opposition under a great handicap. Second, the local Bolshevik leaders knew well that it would be foolish to attempt to subdue the Czechs in open combat and with merely the forces on hand. Their administration would be deposed in no time, and the political repercussions of such a development would be great. The effectiveness of several armed demonstrations of the Czechs, and the public response which these received, had impressed the Bolsheviks. Third, the Czechs expected that this local awareness would have a mitigating influence upon any hasty decision of the Bolshevik leaders in Moscow. After all, they were not against

The Congress of the Representatives of the Czechoslovak Army Corps at Cheliabinsk resolved to delegate the exclusive charge of the transportation of the troops to the Provisional Executive Committee chosen by the Congress. Orders issued by any other Czechoslovak organisation are invalid. With reference to the orders to surrender arms, issued by the representative of the Czechoslovak National Council Maxa, and War Commissar Aralov, the Congress unanimously decided not to surrender arms before reaching Vladivostok because these must safeguard the transport . . .

The Congress protests against the continuous attempts to disarm and stop the trains . . . Although taking certain precautionary measures the Executive Committee hopes that the Soviet Government will place no obstacles in the way of the departure of the Czechoslovak revolutionary troops.

Our hope for a peaceful settlement of this complicated situation is enhanced by the fact that any conflict would injure the position of local Soviet authorities in Siberia."³¹

Because during the debate on Maxa's cable Rocek warned that perhaps Maxa and Cermak were under arrest and had signed their telegram in jail, the congress authorized the PEC to issue special instruction to the couriers just about to leave with a report on the decisions of previous day. The instruction was laconic: Maxa's order concerning the disarmament must not be executed. Pavlu then concluded the morning session of the congress by reminding the delegates that exactly 300 years before, on May 23, 1618, the Czechs had kindled their revolution by the *Defenestration of Prague* to shake off Hapsburg rule. The revolution must continue to its victorious end.³²

Compared with the meeting of the morning, the afternoon session was a quiet event as it dealt with procedural matters. Only one resolution, adopted upon a motion of O. Menzl, was of political nature. The resolution refuted all allegations that the Army Corps was being transported to France against the will of the troops. Also this declaration, like the text of the message which had been cabled in the morning to the Soviet Government, was translated into Russian language, printed on leaflets and distributed among the population.

The presidium then placed on the table a proposal concern-

ing the congress agenda, which was approved without debate. The congress was to preoccupy itself with the following tasks: (1) debate on the nature of the congress; (2) report on activities of the National Council; (3) legal position which the Army Corps would enjoy in France; (4) disciplinary code and military court statute; (5) Army Soviets and their functions; (6) future organizational work in Russia; (7) disability benefits; (8) promotion policies; (9) French language school; (10) nominations for election of a new presidium; (11) congress procedural rules; (12) suggestions. The programme of the congress was all lined up, the first item to be discussed next day. But it was not in the stars for the Czechs to deal with it until August 1918.

Because during the morning debate on Maxa's cable it had been suggested that he and Cermak might be under arrest, V. Holecek proposed that the National Council should publicly be divested of all authority to deal with matters relating to the transportation to Vladivostok. This would deprive the Bolsheviki of any advantage they might derive from having Maxa in their hands and prevent confusion among the troops arising from duality of command. The adopted resolution read:

*"The Congress of the Czechoslovak Army Corps deprives the Czechoslovak National Council, Branch for Russia, of all competence in matters concerning the transportation of the army to Vladivostok. The Congress vests all powers needed for the execution of this task into the Provisional Executive Committee. Only this body is authorized to issue pertinent orders. All directives of the Czechoslovak National Council, Branch for Russia, are invalid."*³³

Also this decision was given to a new batch of couriers, briefed by the PEC in the meantime. Every single train all along the railway line from Penza to Irkutsk was to receive instructions. The revolt of the Czechoslovaks began to spread beyond the confines of Cheliabinsk.

May 23 marked the turning point in the development of the attitude of the congress regarding the problem of making the wheels of trains rolling again. Its members welcomed the day hoping that the example of the Cheliabinsk Soviet, i.e., its co-operation, would be followed by other Soviets. But when the

the Bolsheviks and merely wished to get out of Russia. It seemed extremely unlikely that the shrewd Military Commissar would dare to drive the local Soviets head on against them in a complete disregard of local conditions.

The Military Collegium was further fortified in its hope that the movement to Vladivostok could be resumed peacefully, through co-operation with the local Soviets, by the result of negotiations initiated with the Cheliabinsk Soviet shortly after its delegation had left the congress hall on May 22. These resulted in an agreement whereby the Soviet promised to co-operate in the resumption of the movement from Cheliabinsk to Vladivostok and press upon Moscow to lift the ban on the movement all along the railway line. The agreement convinced the Military Collegium that similar arrangements could be made through careful local efforts elsewhere. This hope thus became the basis of its plan of "peaceful persuasion".

MAY 23RD: THE TURNING POINT

An optimistic mood dominated the thinking of the PEC, as well as of delegates, when they assembled in the morning of May 23 for next plenary session of the congress. The agenda was unassuming: approval of procedural rules; report of the PEC; election of working committees. The first point of the agenda was approved without debate and, as soon as voted upon, the congress elected a new Presidium: Chairman K. Zmrhal; Vice-Chairman V. Brazda; two Secretaries A. Vancura and J. Hrbek; and two other members J. Kustra and A. Kratina.

The report on the second point of the agenda threw the meeting in uproar and dealt a fatal blow to all assumptions upon which the Military Collegium had based its plan of a peaceful resumption of the movement to the Far East. The Chairman of the PEC, Pavlu, took the floor and having secured the consent of the Chairman of the Congress Presidium declared the meeting confidential. He then said that he had just received a most suspicious cable from Maxa and Cermak from Moscow, counter-signed by Aralov, calling for immediate disarmament of all troops and for their surrender to the Soviet authorities who would assume responsibility for their security. Pavlu, however, dispelled the fears of the delegates by saying

that he had more pleasant news to tell to the congress and then read a cable which had been dispatched by Sadlucky to Trotsky, suggesting how the *Czech-Bolshevik crisis* could be resolved. No record of this important communication is available. It reported probably the results of negotiations of Sadlucky with the Czechs and recommended the resumption of their movement as soon as those 800 rifles, which had been seized in Cheliabinsk on May 17, were returned. Sadlucky perhaps warned the government against any rash action and advised to let them out of Russia. The Cheliabinsk Soviet was deadly serious about its agreement with the Czechs because it released two trains of the Sixth Regiment to Omsk and received one train from the west on May 23.²⁰ Previously to that, the Czechs had returned the seized weapons, which closed the *Cheliabinsk incident*.

The debate which followed Pavlu's report was grave. The exchange of views boiled down to a feeling that while the local Soviets seemed on the side of the Czechs, Maxa for some reason played into the hands of hostile Moscow. A consensus prevailed that: (a) Maxa's cable amounted to a declaration of war by the Soviet Government; (b) under no conditions arms would be surrendered; (c) Maxa must be removed. On the basis of this consensus Richter then prepared the following telegram:

"To Soviet of People's Commissars, National Council in Moscow, French Mission in Vologda; all Soviets along the line Cheliabinsk, Samara, Penza, Omsk, Irkutsk; Military Commissar of Yekaterinburg Soviet, Anunchin; Commanders of the Czechoslovak forces in Penza, Samara, Omsk, Novonikolaievsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk.

The Congress of the Czechoslovak revolutionary army, held in Cheliabinsk, declared in the presence of Military Commissar Sadlucky its sympathy with the Russian people who struggle to safeguard their revolution. The congress is, however, convinced that the Soviet Government lacks adequate power to guarantee free and safe transportation of our army to Vladivostok. Therefore, it unanimously decided not to disarm until it received convincing safeguards of free and unimpaired movement to Vladivostok, guaranteeing personal safety of the troops . . .

evening set in these hopes were frustrated.

Maxa's cable introduced a new element into the situation. Now the initiative was clearly in the hands of Moscow, which deprived the Czechs of the possibility of launching their policy of negotiations with the local Soviets. Immediately after the appearance of Maxa's cable, the members of the Military Collegium busied themselves with plans to counter this adverse development. It was obvious that as soon as Moscow learnt about the refusal of the Czechs to disarm and give themselves up the local Bolsheviks would be driven head on against them. This would obliterate the relatively pacific climate which their plan of peaceful persuasion needed to succeed. Though it appeared probable that here and there it might be possible to persuade the local Bolsheviks not to attack, peace could not be preserved for long.

In view of these prospects the PEC ordered the Military Collegium to prepare for worst and work out a plan of forcible resumption of the movement which, in all probability, would have to be resorted to in most places. Because the conditions obtaining in Penza, Samara, Cheliabinsk, Omsk and Irkutsk differed vastly, the conclusions of the Military Collegium were rather hypothetical; moreover, the three commanders were unable to arrive at a concerted plan of action. There is no official record of their discussions available, but Gajda's account affords a general outline of action which was agreed upon in the evening of May 23 just before he departed from Cheliabinsk for Novonikolaievsk (Document No. 9).

More details about the assessment of the situation by the Military Collegium are contained in a letter written by Colonel Vojtechovsky on May 23 at 15.30 and addressed to the commander of the First Division in Penza (Document No. 10).

Measured by all standards the strategic, operational and logistic aspects of the problem which the Military Collegium tackled on crucial May 23 were enormous, as is evident from Map I indicating the position of the entire Czech forces on May 27, 1918. As it appeared obvious that no concerted plan of action could be worked out Gajda suggested that the members of the Military Collegium, and some congress delegates, should at once join their troops to initiate necessary preparations. The whole action must be based and directed

Bolshevik strategy regarding the Czechs. The cable adopted at the morning session of the congress, and communicated to the Soviet Government, blew to bits the basic assumption upon which the Soviet leaders had based their plan for peaceful submission. It will be recalled that the Soviet leaders had anticipated that the disciplinary bonds leading from Maxa down to individual commanders would deliver the troops into the hands of the local Bolsheviks because the troops would voluntarily disarm themselves. But the delegates assembled in Cheliabinsk not only refused to disarm the troops and accept protection of the Soviet authorities, but demanded fresh assurances regarding their further movement to Vladivostok. This refusal of the Czechs, and the downfall of the National Council, dashed all hopes that the troops could be lured into disarming themselves through manipulating the Council's authority. The Bolsheviks had Maxa in their hands, but now he was useless; the Czechs had cast him off.

This prompted the men in the Department of Operations of Trotsky's Commissariat to throw aside all subtlety and strike a hard blow. On May 23 Aralov ordered all Soviets immediately to stop, forcibly disarm and dissolve all Czech units as remnants of the old Imperial Russian Army. This order terminated the pacific efforts of the Bolsheviks to attain their objective by a stratagem of Trotsky-Aralov-Muna scheme. First, however, let us return to May 20, when this scheme had been mounted by arrest of Maxa and Cermak.

As has been pointed out, the Trotsky-Aralov-Muna scheme was based upon the expectation that the disciplinary links leading from the National Council to the troops would stem the tide of the simmering rebellion and induce the troops to disarm and surrender to the Soviet authorities. During the days following Maxa's arrest, Trotsky worked hard to strengthen this bond by making the Allies, the French in particular, put additional pressure upon the Czech troops. The central idea was to reinforce Maxa's hand *vis-a-vis* the rebelling troops by letting the full weight of Allied authority descend upon them in order to destroy the common front achieved at the Cheliabinsk congress. If the combined pressure of Maxa and the Allies could break the Cheliabinsk mutiny and restore supremacy of the Council, then the troops could be handled with

ease: upon disarming themselves they could be dissolved as originally planned.

Trotsky had two hard arguments in hand to make the Allies play his game. These he used with such a consummate skill that in the end it was the French Military Mission in Moscow and the National Council in Omsk who fought the last ditch battle on behalf of the Bolsheviks against the rebelling troops. This battle, to subdue the troops and break the Cheliabinsk mutiny through disciplinary bonds, was waged from Omsk by the unholy alliance of the French, the National Council and the Omsk Soviet.

The first argument which Trotsky played against the ill-informed and trustful Allies was the Cheliabinsk incident. During the interventions undertaken by the Allies on behalf of the arrested Maxa and Cermak on May 21 and 22 Trotsky, Chicherin and Karakhan induced the Allies, who like Maxa lacked exact information about the Cheliabinsk incident, to put pressure upon the Czech troops to make them disarm and accept Soviet protection as demanded by Maxa's cable of May 21. As Markovic reported from Moscow on May 21, the Allies were told that the incident had been an anti-Bolshevik uprising. They were told that it must be settled by compliance of the Czech troops with the conditions accepted on their behalf by the National Council through Maxa and Cermak on May 21, held in "preventive custody".

A far more effective argument in the hands of the Bolsheviks, to involve the Allies in their scheme, was the embarrassing fact that the Allies were in no position to provide immediately the needed tonnage for the First Division at Archangelsk. Trotsky told quite bluntly the Allied representatives intervening on behalf of Maxa and Cermak that if the Allies wished the government to transport the Czechs to Archangelsk, then the government must be satisfied that adequate tonnage would be available in time. Were, however, the tonnage not on hand then the Allies must make the Czechs disarm. In view of the hostile attitude of the Czechs, insisted Trotsky, it was quite inconceivable that the government could permit them to keep weapons and "indulge in anti-government provocations". As the tonnage was not available and the Czechs must wait—this was not the fault of the

government argued Trotsky—the responsibility lay with the Allies to prevent incidents similar to that in Cheliabinsk. There was no need for the Czechs to wait armed for ships because the responsibility for their safety had been taken over by the Soviet Government. The Presidium of the National Council, Maxa and Cermak, had already agreed to these conditions of the government and had issued appropriate instructions.

The Allies were cornered. It must be remembered that Markovic had been told by Lockhart that the Czechs could not participate in these two-day negotiations with the Soviet Government, most probably to avoid seeing the Allies capitulating to Trotsky over the issue of disarmament and tonnage. In fact, there was no other way out for the Allies. The ships were not available, and if the National Council itself had agreed to disarm its troops, to avoid incidents in waiting for ships, then the Allies could easily agree to Trotsky's proposition and see that the troops really disarmed.

Two additional elements blinded the Allies into placing trust in the assurances of Trotsky that as soon as the Czechs had disarmed they would be concentrated in the area originally agreed upon by Trotsky and Maxa on May 15, to wait there peacefully and undisturbed for ships to appear in the north. In the first place, the government prevented the Allies in Vologda and Moscow, and also Maxa, from learning the facts of the Cheliabinsk incident of May 17, and what was happening in Cheliabinsk at the congress then. One of the promises which Trotsky had given to Maxa in jail on May 21 was that he would enable Maxa to telephone to his colleagues in Cheliabinsk so that he could find out for himself the facts of the incident of May 17, and explain to the delegates assembled at the congress the reasons for his disarmament order.³¹ But this promise was never fulfilled and both Maxa and the Allies, having only Trotsky's version of the incident, submitted to his blackmail.

Another factor which turned the Allies, particularly the French, into an instrument of Trotsky against the Czechs was a notion that honour and prestige of France were at stake if the French Military Mission in Russia failed to make the Czechs perform the Soviet-French plan regarding the Archangelsk Project, which now entailed the disarmament of the

Czechs. The Chief of the French Military Mission General Lavergne, and his assistants Major Guinet and Captain Pascal, really exerted themselves to show Trotsky that the French always honoured their obligations.³⁵ It was because of his involvement in the Archangelsk Project that General Lavergne dispatched, upon Maxa's insistence, Major Guinet and Captain Pascal to Omsk to strengthen the hand of the National Council against the rebellious troops and suppress the Cheliabinsk mutiny. It was inconceivable to him that the Czechs could defy Marshal Foch and his order directing the First Division to Archangelsk. Besides, the legitimate channel of authority, the National Council, must be upheld at any cost. And, finally, the understanding of Maxa with Trotsky of May 21—the disarmament of the Czechs prior to their transport to the concentration points to wait there for ships—must be executed. Otherwise the Archangelsk Project was in danger. This is how Lavergne probably saw the situation. The Czechs were at fault.

Major Guinet and Captain Pascal arrived in Omsk on May 23 and introduced themselves to the National Council as *liaison officers to accompany the troops to Archangelsk*. Although immediately after their arrival views were exchanged, the crucial conference took place next day, May 24. The Czech side was represented by Kudela, Glos and the Commander of the Army Corps General Shokhorov. The Czechs welcomed the French delegation with great relief and as an arbiter who would overrule the decisions of the Cheliabinsk mutiny and restore the authority of the National Council and the Military Command. According to Kudela's own account, he informed the French that though he lacked details regarding the congress a report just received from Holecek in Cheliabinsk indicated that: (1) the whole Army Corps would proceed to Vladivostok; (2) movement would be executed under Czechs' own management and resources; (3) the congress had elected an eleven-member committee to execute this task.³⁶

This was a shock to Major Guinet. Regarding the first point, he said that the congress had over-reached itself because it lacked authority to deal with matters relating to the Archangelsk route. This was an Allied concern. He further emphasized that he was "under orders of Marshal Foch to execute the transfer of the First Division to Archangelsk"; *this had been*

decided irrevocably by the Supreme War Council in Versailles. The congress was a mutiny; he would see that it rescinded its decisions and that the troops submitted to the legitimate commanding authority. Regarding the second point, Guinet said that all wishes of the Soviet Government concerning the Army Corps must be respected and all its conditions and demands fulfilled; this referred to the disarmament demands and other conditions entailed in Maxa's cable of May 21. Guinet insisted that these conditions must not be considered an ultimatum, and that further negotiations with the government would mitigate their harshness. Regarding the third point, Guinet insisted that there was no need for the Provisional Executive Committee. Because the troops of the First Division would go to Archangelsk and not Vladivostok their transfer would be executed by the National Council and the Military Command, which must be restored to full authority. To assert their authority a telegram was dispatched to Cheliabinsk requesting the congress to stop its proceedings because a delegation, composed of members of the National Council, the Army Command and the French representatives, was about to depart for Cheliabinsk. The conference then decided, because time was essential, that the trains of the Council and the command would leave Omsk immediately.³⁷ The mutiny must be quelled.

The arrival of Major Guinet in Omsk on May 23, coupled with a strange combination of circumstances, made Omsk the centre from which the Soviet Government attempted to arrest the initiative emanating from the Cheliabinsk congress. First, because in Omsk were located the National Council and the command, the very headquarters and the nerve centre of the Army Corps. Second, because Omsk was the centre of a most rabid anti-Czech propaganda fomented by a strong garrison of Internationalists. We have seen that the Executive Committee of the Soviet was in fact a prisoner of these Internationalists and enjoyed very limited freedom of action. Also geography played into the hands of the Bolsheviks. There was quite a distance between Cheliabinsk and Omsk, about 700 miles. Thus the Bolsheviks could build up a position of strength in Omsk in order to arrest the movement of the Czech troops should this be executed on the basis of decisions of the Cheliabinsk congress. The Bolsheviks in Omsk exploited all these factors to the full.

They co-operated first with the National Council and the French in an attempt to break the power of the Cheliabinsk congress and restore the National Council to its supremacy. But when this effort failed and the PEC, in co-operation with the Cheliabinsk Soviet, began dispatching trains towards Omsk on May 23 the Omsk Soviet broke away from this alliance and prepared an ambush for the trains just released from Cheliabinsk.

It will be recalled that the relations between the National Council and the Omsk Soviet were not too cordial, and that on May 16 the Soviet had rejected the Council's request to release the trains of the National Council and the Army Corps Command for Cheliabinsk to enable their representatives to take part in the congress. With the arrival of the French on May 23 the situation changed greatly. Immediate negotiations were initiated between the National Council and the French on the one hand, and the Bolsheviks on the other, with a view of sending these two trains to Cheliabinsk to assert the authority of the National Council. Several conferences took place between these two parties; the Czechs and the French even secured assistance of the Omsk Soviet in communicating to the Cheliabinsk congress, through the Soviet of Cheliabinsk, that the supreme authority in all Czech matters still lay in the hands of the National Council and the Army Corps Command.²⁸

It seems that extensive negotiations took place between Omsk and Moscow, during which the Omsk Bolsheviks told Trotsky that the power of the congress could be broken through common efforts of the Bolsheviks, the French and the National Council only if the Cheliabinsk Soviet stopped yielding and ceased co-operating with the PEC.²⁹ It was, perhaps, on the basis of this exchange that Moscow finally granted to the Omsk Bolsheviks the permission to let the two trains of the Czech high command, representing the source of authority playing so well into the hands of Trotsky, proceed to Cheliabinsk.³⁰

But Moscow had not placed all its hope in the effort in Omsk. The military authorities in the Department of Operations were in the position to see the picture from all angles. The cables received from the Cheliabinsk congress indicated that the development on the Czech side had reached the point of no return, and that it would be useless and dangerous to expect the National

Council, though supported by the Allies and the Bolsheviks, to stem the tide. The Trotsky-Aralov-Muna scheme was buried. The congress had not only checkmated the attempt to lure the troops into disarmament under Maxa's order of May 21, but ceased recognizing Maxa and deposed the entire National Council. Above all, the congress had seized initiative and forged ahead by inducing the Cheliabinsk Soviet to dispatch, on May 23, two trains towards Omsk and receive trains from Samara. A conclusion was inescapable that the Czechs had succeeded in breaking through the encirclement and that nothing short of armed action would subdue these rebellious troops.

To offset the initiative emanating from Cheliabinsk no time must be lost, because should the Czechs succeed in inducing the Soviets in Samara and Penza to renew the movement of their trains and the strong Penza group would start to move towards Cheliabinsk, it would be extremely difficult for the Omsk Bolsheviks to arrest such an advance. The greatest danger lay in the renewed movement of trains. The Czechs would not only break through the local encirclement but achieve a concentration of the Penza, Samara and Cheliabinsk groups, amounting to about 16,000 men. Under the conditions obtaining in Central Russia it was a formidable array. It was doubtful that Moscow could assemble in Omsk adequate forces, either by depriving the Siberian Soviets between Omsk and Irkutsk of all their available men or through shifting to Omsk reinforcements from Central Russia and Volga region. First, the Siberian Soviets had only meagre forces; second, any regroupment from Central Russia and the Volga region towards Omsk was out of the question because it would break the local encirclements and permit the Czechs to renew the movement without difficulty.

It was against this strategic background that in the evening of May 23 the telegraph wires carried the following message of the Chief of the Department of Operations, A.A. Aralov, to all Soviets:

"Further to the earlier order the movement of all Czech trains must be stopped, the men disarmed and their units dissolved as a remnant of the old regular army. The men should be organized to form units of the Red Army or

labour battalions. For assistance of the Czechoslovak Communists contact the Consulates of the Czechoslovak Social Democrats in Penza, Samara, Petropavlovsk and Omsk. All measures taken and results attained must be reported to the Commissar of War in Moscow."⁴¹

Aralov's message was terse, but every line reflected the new position of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs. First, the movement of all trains must be stopped. This overruled the agreement of the PEC with the Cheliabinsk Soviet on the renewed transportation to and from Cheliabinsk. There was no chance now that other Soviets would conclude similar agreements with the Czechs. The message then called for the disarmament of the troops and their dissolution. The Trotsky-Aralov-Muna scheme had been based upon the expectation that the troops could be manoeuvred into disarming themselves, and then dissolved, without too much opposition. This expectation failed. Now it was the task of the local Soviets to disarm them forcibly. The whole operation had to be carried out under the threat or use of forces assembled against the Czechs since middle of May.

The sentence of Aralov's cable demanding the disarmament and dissolution of the Czech units as remnants of the old Imperial Army, is highly significant. Though Trotsky had made the Allies to agree to the disarmament of the troops on or after May 21, ostensibly as a condition to be fulfilled prior to their concentration at Perm to wait there for ships, he kept secret from them his intention of dissolving their units and Aralov's orders of May 21 to that effect. Had the Allies known that their sponsored disarmament of the troops would be followed by their dissolution, they would not have yielded to Trotsky. But now the game of hide-and-seek was over. Realizing that the truth could be concealed no longer, and anticipating that the dissolution of the troops would meet with strong protests from the Allies, the Soviet Government withdrew its tacit recognition, whatever it might have been, that the Army Corps was an Allied military formation.

This is not the place for an analysis of the legal aspects of this step by the government and the way it affected, rather should have affected, the Allied-Soviet relations. From our

point of view it is important to realize that the revocation of the international status of the Army Corps was undertaken to reassert the domestic jurisdiction of the Russian state over it. This had been lost through a number of agreements concluded by Kerensky's Provisional Government with Masaryk in 1917, which had conferred a quasi-international status upon it. After the Bolshevik *coup* of November 1917 the Army Corps started to function as a fully independent body in all respects. But it will be recalled that the Soviet Government had never officially recognized it as an Allied military unit. This was quite impossible in view of the provisions of the Brest-Litovsk treaty pertaining to neutrality of the Soviet Government and the dissolution of all Allied troops stationed on Russian soil. Stalin's cable of March 26, approving the terms of the Penza Agreement, precisely to avoid the legal complications arising out of the peace treaty, purposefully labelled the Army Corps as a group of "private citizens" allowed to carry a "known number of weapons" for protection of supplies and self-defence against criminal bands.

It cannot be denied that in ordering the local Soviets to dissolve the Army Corps as a remnant of the old Imperial Army, disbanded on March 2, 1918, the Soviet Government had a strong legal point which would be difficult for the Allies to refute. It must be emphasized that the government had never concluded any agreement with any of the Allies which would have recognized the Army Corps as an Allied military body.

Obviously, Trotsky knew well that he was in a very strong position, and that if he played safe he could outwit both the National Council and the Allies. First, he recognized and exploited the special responsibility which the Allies claimed to have for the Army Corps to harness them to the Trotsky-Aralov-Muna scheme: the Allies would disarm the Czechs. And when this was achieved, Trotsky would assert full Soviet authority over the Army Corps to deprive the Allies of their special rights prior to its dissolution. The Allies would have no legal basis for interceding on behalf of the Czechs. Should the Czechs offer resistance, they would be dealt with as rebels or common criminals. Maxa's order of May 21, probably drafted by Trotsky himself, had placed outside the law anyone refusing to disarm and surrender to the Soviet authorities. This seems

to be the full implication of the reference to the old army in Aralov's cable of May 23.

The last important point of Aralov's cable indicates that the order was to facilitate the final settlement of the Czech issue. The point is his reference to assistance to be obtained from the "Consulates" of the Czech Communists functioning in Penza, Samara, Petropavlovsk and Omsk. It will be recalled that the Czechoslovak Bureau within Stalin's Commissariat had published on May 17 a plan on how to handle the dissolved units anticipating either service in the Red Army or permanent settlement in Russia. Aralov's cable now brought the Czech Communists into the picture to implement the plan.

Aralov's reference calling for co-operation of the local Bolsheviks with the Consulates of the Czech Communists appears to have yet another significance. It will be recalled that the Czech Communists were planning for some time a congress to merge all their party groups operating in several places in Russia. The congress was to open in Moscow on May 25 to unify the Communist forces, elect a centralized leadership and plot the course of further action. It was envisaged as a fulfilment of all political efforts of the Soviet Government and the Czech Communists, undertaken since the beginning of April, in order to promote the Communist Party into an organ of state power of the future Czechoslovak Republic. The reference to the Consulates of the Czech Communists in various places in Russia seems to indicate that the Soviet Government and the Czech Communists had already entered into a sort of state-to-state relationship. Two days after Aralov's cable their congress in Moscow deposed the National Council, and the Communist Party formally assumed all rights over all Czechoslovak citizens in Russia.

Aralov's cable of May 23 was the last word of the Soviet Government on the Czech issue. It closed a short period of efforts to subdue the Army Corps in a peaceful manner and inaugurated a phase of militant policies towards the Czechs. Though peace was preserved for two more days, whatever steps the government and the local Soviets undertook after this date derived from the decision to subdue the Czechs by force of arms. These steps had no bearing upon the origin of the conflict, and merely represented its militant phase.

* * *

With the three Czech commanders returning in the evening of May 23 from Cheliabinsk to join their troops in order to resume even forcibly the movement to Vladivostok, and with Aralov's cable of the same date ordering the local Soviets forcibly to liquidate the Army Corps, an armed conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks became inevitable.

6

Swords Are Crossed

THE MILITANT phase of the unfolding confrontation of the Czechs with the Bolsheviks developed very unevenly. In several places, particularly in Penza and Cheliabinsk, negotiations went on for a number of days, each side attempting to avoid the clash of arms as long as possible. True, the local Soviets had Aralov's and Trotsky's orders since May 21, but they recoiled at the thought of having to execute them. In fact, they refused to do so and frankly informed Trotsky to that effect. They even warned Trotsky against far-reaching consequences any harsh measures would produce, and advised him to let the Czechs proceed to Vladivostok as the government had originally promised. They could not be defeated in open combat; this was their verdict.

Also the Czech side had weighty reasons for negotiating with the local Soviets in order to exhaust the very last possibility for a local peaceful settlement. It was preferable for the Czechs to co-operate with, instead of fight against, the local Soviets. True, the Czechs enjoyed a preponderance of power which would defeat the local Red Army and the Internationalists, but it was a long way to Vladivostok. Thus while the Central Government dealt harshly with the local Soviets in driving them to attack the Czechs, the latter displayed moderation in dealing with the local authorities. These were assured that there

was no danger from the Czech side; the only thing the Czechs insisted upon was the performance of the Penza Agreement by letting them to renew the movement of their trains towards the east. This could be done either by overt or covert co-operation of the local Soviets with them. The Czech leaders assured the local Bolsheviks that they understood well their difficult position, and promised not to aggravate this by directly implicating them in the resumption of the movement. All that was needed was quiet co-operation, or mere abstention from direct action against the Czechs when these would resume the movement on their own.

This tactics succeeded at least in Cheliabinsk, where the local Soviet quietly dispatched a few trains towards Omsk; but there the plan of peaceful persuasion was wrecked. As soon as the Omsk Soviet learnt about the departure of these trains it planted a clumsy trap in which first blood was spilled; the Czechs killed 250 Bolsheviks and themselves lost 18 men. The conflict thus entered into its militant phase.

As a result of this encounter Trotsky fired an angry cable to all Soviets ordering them immediately to disarm and to dissolve all Czech units under the penalty of shooting every soldier caught with a rifle in hand. To Trotsky's chagrin this order also was not executed at once. The local Soviets warned against such a step and pleaded with him for reinforcements. The commissar thundered back that the Red Army was not a debating club, and that his orders must be carried out at once. Any commander procrastinating in disarming the Czechs would be court-martialed.

Meanwhile, the attitude of the local Soviets, labouring hard under Trotsky's last order, stiffened and thus frustrated the hopes of the Czech leaders that through quiet co-operation with local administrations a forcible resumption of the movement of their trains could be avoided. The negotiations in Penza deadlocked soon, and even in Cheliabinsk the Bolsheviks began to sabotage the peaceful effort at renewing the movement. The Czechs finally reached for arms and in a series of bold strikes secured a number of important railway centres stretching from Volga to the Ural Mountains. Penza, Samara, Ufa, Cheliabinsk and Yekaterinburg were soon in their hands. In most places the local Bolshevik administration was left functioning

to prove that the Czechs were not organizing an anti-Bolshevik uprising, but merely forcing their way out of Russia. In some places, however, no negotiations were attempted by either the Czechs or the Bolsheviks, and both parties went right ahead with implementing their conflicting objectives in a militant way. This was particularly true on the easternmost flank, in Omsk, Novonikolaievsk and Irkutsk.

By that time, however, Trotsky rejected the last offer of the Czechs suggesting a peaceful settlement, threw all his available manpower against them, secured military and technical assistance of Berlin to that end, and declared a general mobilization of all male population of Russia between 18 and 40 years of age. Thus the stage for the great confrontation was set.

It was through a strange coincidence that both parties began their military operations on May 25, and in places not too far from each other. First to strike were the Bolsheviks.

SLAUGHTER AT OMSK

According to one Soviet source an excited telegraphic conversation took place between Omsk and Moscow as soon as the Omsk Bolsheviks learnt about the agreement which had been concluded by the Czechs with the Cheliabinsk Soviet on May 22. It will be remembered that this agreement concerned the renewal of the movement, and that two trains left for Omsk on May 23. During this telegraphic exchange the Omsk Bolsheviks urged the Central Government in Moscow to take immediate and final action in order to dispose with the Czechs for good.¹ The Bolsheviks in Omsk simply abhorred the prospect of having to deal with 8,000 men of the Cheliabinsk group, who would be allowed to move upon Omsk, this capital of Western Siberia, within next few days. Because the entry of this military body into Siberia would badly upset the balance of forces of the whole region, it was imperative for the Omsk Bolsheviks to prevent it from leaving Cheliabinsk. Even a mere passing through of its trains would be dangerous, as the Soviet power in this whole region was rapidly declining. A number of civilian and military anti-Bolshevik groups had sprung up in almost all larger cities, and there was no small danger that the mere presence of the Czechs could, in one or other way

be exploited to further aggravate the precarious position of the Bolsheviks.²

The first attempt to arrest the movement of these trains, to be released from Cheliabinsk, was made through a telegraphic intervention of the Military Commander of Omsk Soviet, Commissar Furtsov, with the Commander of Czech forces in Cheliabinsk, Colonel Vojcechovsky and with the Chairman of the PEC B. Pavlu. In the morning of May 25 Furtsov called the two Czech leaders and demanded an answer why, and under whose authority, their trains had been released from Cheliabinsk. He had information that a threat of force had been made by the Czechs to induce the local Soviet into complying with their demand. Colonel Vojcechovsky replied that he must warn Furtsov against any attempts at stopping the trains then on their way to Omsk. The Omsk Soviet must drop all objections to the movement of the Czech troops. The Czechs had a simple and clear objective: to get to Vladivostok and from there to France.

Furtsov was furious. He declared that the supreme authority for the Czechs rested in the hands of the National Council and asked whether Vojcechovsky was familiar with Maxa's order of May 21 concerning voluntary disarmament, and why he disobeyed. Vojcechovsky retorted that the congress in Cheliabinsk was the supreme authority, that he was under its command, and that Maxa's order was invalid and cannot be binding; all trains would go to Vladivostok. All misunderstandings between the Czechs and the Cheliabinsk Bolsheviks had been removed and the latter promised to plead with Omsk not to object to their movement to that port. Furtsov became angry, did not let Vojcechovsky finish his explanation and left the apparatus. He instructed one of his assistants to tell Vojcechovsky to desist from taking any action until he concluded his negotiations with Moscow, in which he was engaged for some time. Vojcechovsky ended the exchange by stating that two more trains would be dispatched from Cheliabinsk towards Omsk on May 25, and asked whether the trains already in Petropavlovsk and Omsk could resume their movement towards Vladivostok. Now Furtsov's assistant failed to respond and hung up.³

The PEC dealt with this unco-operative attitude of the Omsk

Bolsheviks and concluded that any hostile operations based upon Omsk could seriously handicap the entire plan of the exit via Vladivostok, decided upon by the congress. It was obvious that any action which might be taken by the Omsk Soviet against the trains released from Cheliabinsk on May 23 must be resisted, and that in all probability it would be impossible to avoid a clash of arms. It also appeared highly improbable that the clash could be contained locally; rather a contrary development must be anticipated. The Omsk Bolsheviks must be frankly and simply told about these prospects and made to yield. In view of these considerations the PEC drafted a cable which was dispatched to Furtsov in Omsk at once (Document No. 11).

Furtsov proved adamant, and in response to this warning of the PEC fired at Vojcechovsky an angry telegram showing the determination of the Omsk Soviet to arrest the movement from Cheliabinsk at whatever price:

"... We consider your threat of force as a declaration of war. It is entirely out of the question to let your trains to proceed armed. We wish to impress upon you the fact that it is not upon us, but upon the Central Government, to make the final decision with regard to the movement of your trains. We urge you to take up the whole matter with Moscow at once. Any pressure you might wish to exert in order to overrule the decision made by the Central Government in this matter would be considered as an inadmissible interference in our internal affairs..."¹⁴

It was because of this irreconcilable position taken by both parties that the very first armed exchange between the Bolsheviks and the Czechs took place on May 25. Evidence on hand enables a fairly accurate reconstruction of the whole incident. This is important, because the incident was never satisfactorily explained, and because it is veiled in obscurity which sometimes tended to support inaccurate interpretations of the whole Czech-Bolshevik issue. It also clearly shows who fired the first shot.

* According to a Bolshevik Commander Germanov, who was an eye-witness of Soviet preparations in Omsk and who personally took part in this encounter, the Bolsheviks in Omsk learnt

on May 24 that two trains of the Sixth Regiment had been released from Cheliabinsk on previous day. The Soviet command decided that an armed expedition consisting of 290 men, under the command of Commissar Uspensky, would be sent to a station called Kulomsino in order to halt the advancing Czechs and to demand surrender of all weapons and ammunition. Then the trains would be inspected for hidden weapons and released towards Omsk.⁵ The Kulomsino station was a suburb of Omsk, and protected the western approaches to the city by controlling a bridge over Irtysh River. It was sitting right on the western end of a bridge over that river and appeared a most advantageous point where to stop the Czechs because, if it came to worst, the Czechs could be prevented from entering Omsk by simply demolishing the bridge. From Soviet sources it is clear that the task of this plan was first to deprive the Czechs of all arms, and then to let them step into a trap laid at the Omsk railway station. According to a testimony given to the Czechs by railway personnel of the Omsk station after the fall of Omsk, the two disarmed trains were to be derailed at the station and their men machine gunned by the Bolsheviks hidden in a close-by building.⁶

The Omsk railway station thus buzzed with carefully concealed activity all night from May 24 to 25, the preparations coming into full view only after the staff train of the Army Corps Command left for Cheliabinsk at 6 A.M. on May 25. One member of the National Council, who happened to be at that time at the station to say good-bye to his colleagues, observed that an armed Bolshevik expedition boarded two trains, allegedly against Semenov, but that actually the trains left in the opposite direction, towards Cheliabinsk.⁷ The trains then crossed the Irtysh River and stopped in the Kulomsino station to wait for the two trains to arrive from Cheliabinsk,

In the meantime, the two trains of the Sixth Regiment steamed towards the fateful encounter. As soon as they arrived in Petropavlovsk on May 24 the Commander of the staff train, Captain O. Hanus, ordered the movement towards Omsk to begin at once. The local railway administration first refused to supply fresh locomotives, but in the end complied. The staff train then pulled out of the station, being closely followed by the train of the Second Battalion of the Sixth

Regiment. During the night from May 24 to 25 the trains arrived in Izil-Kul, a station half way between Petropavlovsk and Omsk. The local commissar pleasantly surprised the Czechs by stating that he had no objection to their further movement towards Omsk, and that in fact the Omsk Soviet had already requested him to release them at once.

The trains left Izil-Kul without delay, the staff train first. Sometime in the morning of May 25 this train met the train of the Army Corps Staff, proceeding to Cheliabinsk, which had left Omsk at 6 o'clock of the same day. It was an embarrassing meeting; the deposed command met the rebels. Captain Hanus merely stated that he was acting under the authority of the PEC. To this the Commander of the Army Corps, General Shokhorov, replied that he would have no instructions to give, politely avoiding the issue of mutiny by stating that he was not familiar with the situation. He made no attempt at stopping Hanus; he merely warned that Omsk had mobilized and that an endeavour would be made there to disarm his trains. The train of Captain Hanus had only 120 rifles, but he decided to move forward, arriving in Kulomsino at 12 noon, the train of the Second Battalion trailing some 20 miles behind. Omsk was in sight beyond the river, almost at the reach of the Czechs. But how strange it appeared to Hanus that such a small station had such a strong garrison as the platform was packed to capacity with fully armed Red Army men. Hanus put his men on alert and ordered the train to stop.

It will be recalled that in the morning Commissar Uspensky and his 290 men had arrived in Kulomsino with the task to disarm the Czechs and then let them to step into the ambush planted in Omsk. But the situation did not develop as the Bolsheviks expected. Hardly the train stopped Commissar Uspensky ordered all their Russian personnel, i.e., locomotive drivers, stockers and breakmen, to leave their posts. Then he requested Captain Hanus to order his men to surrender all arms and to permit the Bolsheviks an inspection of all cars to convince themselves that no weapons were withheld. Only then the trains would be allowed to continue towards Omsk. Hanus had, anticipating trouble, ordered his own railway personnel before negotiating with Uspensky to occupy all posts vacated by the Russians to keep the boiler under steam

and the locomotive ready to resume the movement upon his signal.

It was exasperating to argue with the Bolsheviks. Hanus first invoked the Penza Agreement and refused to surrender one single rifle; but in the end he said that he would give up 20 rifles if the Bolsheviks let his train proceed to Omsk. Uspensky rejected the offer and insisted that all weapons must be surrendered. He further demanded that the Czechs let the Bolsheviks enter the train at once to inspect it, even before disarmament. Because Hanus flatly refused, Uspensky ordered his men to encircle the train and sent to Omsk for reinforcements and machine guns. But before the Bolsheviks could charge Hanus gave a signal for a swift retreat, the train breaking loose from the Bolsheviks without incident. Here ended the first encounter.⁸

About 20 miles west from Omsk, at a station called Alonskii Roziezd, Hanus's train met with the train of the Second Battalion. A short conference between their two commanders resulted in a cable to the Omsk Soviet protesting against the attempted disarmament of the Czechs at the Kulomsino station and demanding from the Omsk Soviet to free the line towards Vladivostok. The commanders then decided that both trains would return to Marianovka, about six miles further west, to wait there for arrival of the entire Sixth Regiment from Cheliabinsk. An advance upon Omsk would be mounted as soon as the whole regiment assembled. The train of Captain Hanus left for Marianovka at once. But as the train of the Second Battalion was about to depart a jolt snapped the coupling, and one of the damaged cars had to be disjoined and derailed. The whole operation was quickly executed and, as the train just began to move, two Bolshevik military trains appeared swiftly advancing from the Omsk side upon the Czechs. A race ensued, the Czechs leaving the Bolsheviks in some places only a few yards behind. The commander of the surprised train realized that he must reach Marianovka at all cost, because assistance of troops under Hanus against the obviously numerous Bolsheviks was necessary to defeat the attack. He told his men not to shoot at the Bolsheviks to avoid engagement until Marianovka was reached. But he divided his men into two groups, to be deployed as soon as the train stopped from two sides should the Bolsheviks continue the pursuit. The

Bolsheviks must be caught in their trains and prevented from unfolding their lines.

The last scene of this encounter was enacted in Marianovka. The chronicler of the Sixth Regiment, an eye-witness, portrays Marianovka as a small and quiet place. The train of Hanus, which had arrived some time before, belched out huge clouds of black smoke, the men leisurely strolling along the main railway building smoking their papirosy. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon that this restful scenery suddenly was turned into a scene of bloody massacre. The men strolling at the platform saw the train of the Second Battalion rushing into the station in full speed and, before the squeaking sound of breaks could died away, all troops jumped out and began to deploy on both sides of the track. Seeing this scene the men on the platform began running for rifles and, before they could take positions along their comrades, two Bolshevik trains firing from machine guns appeared with their troops jumping out on both their sides and attempting to break through towards the station building.⁸ But by this time the Czechs returned fire and began to close upon the attacking trains from all sides, which prevented the Bolsheviks from unfolding their own lines. What followed was a ghastly spectacle, the bodies of killed Bolsheviks piling up high on both sides of their trains. The exchange lasted about 40 minutes. The Bolsheviks left on the battle-field over 250 dead, the Czechs 18. About 130 Bolsheviks surrendered, rest dispersed into woods. It is important to note that well over 80 per cent of the Bolsheviks shot and captured were the Internationalists of Hungarian nationality. The Czechs had 15 wounded. In the middle of the engagement, another armed Bolshevik train approached the battle-field from the Omsk side. But smelling that not everything was well in Marianovka it stopped at a respectable distance, fired two shots from a field piece and retreated.¹⁰

As the sun began to set over Marianovka on May 25 the Czechs collected their dead comrades and decided to retreat further west, to the Moskalenky station, to join two more trains of the Sixth Regiment waiting there. The next day, on Sunday, the dead were buried. Overwhelmed by grief the Czechs gave up the idea of advancing upon Omsk to force the Soviet to open the line to Vladivostok as had been contemplated

at the Alonskii Roziezd.¹¹ Instead, the Bolsheviks from Omsk enticed the Czechs into protracted negotiations and the latter, victorious on the field of battle, bartered away at the green table all advantages they could have derived from their victory and an immediate advance upon Omsk. These were truly great. Captain Hanus could not have known that Omsk would have fallen without much resistance, and that Omsk was the kingpin of the entire offensive plan of Moscow against the Czechs. The fall of Omsk into their hands would have changed the whole strategic picture. There is every reason to believe that Trotsky would have finally realized the futility and danger of his attempts at retaining the Czechs in Russia. With Omsk in their hands the way to Vladivostok was open, and there was very little to prevent the integration of the Penza and the Cheliabinsk groups. But with Omsk in Bolshevik hands the city could be built into a fortress to close the only gap through which the Czechs could escape, and this is precisely what Trotsky set out to do after Omsk was saved through negotiations.

The news of the crushing defeat which Uspensky's armed expedition had suffered at Marianovka had a profound effect not only upon the Omsk Soviet but upon further policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs. The tales of the Red Army men, who escaped from Marianovka to Omsk, convinced the Bolshevik leaders that if the Czechs were permitted to advance upon Omsk it would fall. The Czechs achieved a concentration of four trains, and much augmented their fire-power through weapons and ammunition seized from the two captured trains. Moreover, the Soviet in Cheliabinsk was co-operating with them and it could be expected that they might mount an advance upon Omsk with the entire Cheliabinsk group of 8,000 men. As one member of the National Council observed, he was at that time in Omsk, the defeat at Marianovka shattered completely the morale and confidence of the Omsk garrison. The Bolshevik command itself had little hope that Omsk could successfully be defended if the Czechs attacked at once.

The fall of Omsk would make further prospects of the Bolsheviks gloomy. Their leaders in Omsk realized that with Omsk in Czech hands and, with Cheliabinsk under their control, hardly anything could stop the Penza group from

crossing the Volga River and rolling to the east; and beyond Cheliabinsk the line to Vladivostok was practically free. The Irkutsk Soviet was in no position to offer resistance. As the safety of Omsk depended upon the Cheliabinsk Soviet not releasing any Czech trains towards Omsk, the Secretary of the Omsk Soviet, Commissar Karlov, put a frantic call to the Cheliabinsk comrades in the afternoon of May 25:

"This is Secretary of the Omsk Soviet Karlov. Please call at once the Chairman of your Soviet; you yourself stand by. This is an important matter. How many Czech trains are there in Cheliabinsk? Until the final decision is reached in Omsk you must resort to any means not to let them out of Cheliabinsk. An incident took place here because the Czechs resisted our efforts at disarming them (at the Kulomsino station, *Ed.*); they also attempted to concentrate their forces. Explain to them that their trains cannot be released from Cheliabinsk because of the incident which happened in Omsk, and that the Baikal and the Tomsk lines refuse to admit their trains. No Czech train must leave Cheliabinsk at all cost. Tell the Chairman of the Soviet that he must immediately mobilize the Red Army; this must be executed carefully and without publicity. The telegraph must continuously be attended by the Commander of the Red Army. I, personally, will attend this end.

Here is Vice-Chairman of the Omsk Soviet. The Czech trains must be prevented from leaving Cheliabinsk at all cost . . . Even if you were to dismantle the railway line. Be on guard, and place strong sentries in the office of your Soviet and at the railway station. The Czechs must be left unaware of all these preparations. Abrogate your agreement with them (of May 22, *Ed.*), and explain that their trains cannot be released due to shortage of bread, and due to the refusal of the Omsk line to receive them. Here a conflict flared up, and all Oblast Soviets are sitting in extraordinary sessions to decide what steps to take against the Czechs. Be ready. Communicate all this to Kurgan."¹²

Thus the entire Siberia, under the direction of the Omsk

Soviet, was mobilized for an encounter with the Czechs. There was also a frantic exchange between Omsk and the Bolshevik military command in Moscow. The Moscow leaders did not fail to realize the strategic significance of the Omsk Soviet, and that the success of the entire anti-Czech campaign depended upon two elements. First, the Czechs must be prevented from achieving concentration at the gates of Omsk and from advancing upon that city. Second, the Penza and the Cheliabinsk groups must be rendered helpless by forcing upon them an immediate disarmament. Any further procrastination in the matters would be fatal.

It was against this background that the nocturnal exchange between Omsk and Moscow resulted in a policy whereby the leaders in the Kremlin hoped to achieve both these objectives. The Soviets in Penza and Cheliabinsk must adopt a hard attitude and shoot every Czech refusing to disarm, while the Omsk Bolsheviks would play it soft by promising the trains at the gate of Omsk a free and armed exit towards Vladivostok if the idea of attacking and seizing Omsk was given up. The Bolsheviks would lure them by posing prepared to negotiate anew the whole issue of their exit.

This dual policy was put into effect at once. First went out of Moscow Trotsky's order No. 1847-R-193. It was clocked in the telegraph room of his commissariat on May 25 at 11 P.M. Trotsky was furious at procrastination of the local Soviets and ordered to shoot any Czech refusing to disarm:

"All Soviets along the railway line are hereby ordered immediately to disarm all Czech trains. Any delay in the execution of this order will severely be punished. Every Czechoslovak soldier apprehended anywhere on the line with a rifle in hand must be shot on the spot. Should even one armed soldier be found in a railway car its entire crew must be disembarked and locked in a prisoners of war camp. The local Military Commanders are fully responsible for the immediate execution of this order; any delay will be considered treason and punished accordingly. New and numerous reinforcements are being deployed into the rear of the Czechoslovaks with orders to bring them to submission. Every honest Czechoslovak, who disarmed and surrendered to Soviet

authorities, will be treated as a brother and assisted in all manner. The Railway Administrations are hereby ordered not to release even one Czech train towards the east. Anyone yielding to force, and to the threat of force, and helping the Czechoslovaks in renewing the movement of their trains towards the east, will be court-martialed. This order must be read to all Czechoslovak units and to the railway personnel in stations with their trains. The Military Commanders are personally responsible for the fulfilment of this order. They will report results to the People's Commissar of War L. Trotsky."¹³

Thus the Penza and Cheliabinsk groups had to be forcibly disarmed. Then came the holding-off operation in order to immobilize the Sixth Regiment concentrated at the gates of Omsk. In early hours of May 26 the Omsk Soviet dispatched a delegation to Moskalenky to offer Captain Hanus an honourable settlement and request him to send a delegation to Omsk to negotiate it. What made Hanus accept the invitation is not certain; perhaps it was the warning telegraphed to him by Colonel Vojcechovsky on May 24, which Hanus had received at Petropavlovsk. Vojcechovsky urged him to display the utmost cautiousness in approaching Omsk in order to prevent an armed clash.¹⁴ Vojcechovsky knew very well that a clash with the Omsk Bolsheviks would close the door to the east. Perhaps this warning had something to do with Hanus's decision. Now Hanus said to the delegates that he was prepared to negotiate, provided that he were connected with the members of the National Council in Omsk to find out whether these were not imprisoned. Telegraphic exchange was arranged at once and Hanus, being told by one member of the Council in Omsk that he and his colleagues had not been harmed, sent his plenipotentiaries to Omsk to negotiate the promised free and armed exit.

The Czechs were no match for the Bolsheviks at the green table; the latter negotiated with a great skill and achieved all their objectives by merely placating the Czechs with promises. Under the agreement concluded at 12 noon on May 26 the Bolsheviks promised that: (1) the Marianovka incident would be investigated by a mixed commission; (2) the Omsk Soviet would exert all its influence in order to convince Moscow that

the entire Army Corps should be allowed to continue to Vladivostok; (3) the Czechs should be allowed to keep their arms. The Czechs promised to: (1) release all captured at Marianovka and seized at Izil-Kul; (2) return all seized weapons; (3) maintain the *status quo* at Moskalenky. Until the question of further movement of their trains towards Vladivostok was settled with the Omsk and the Irkutsk Soviets and Moscow, no trains would be permitted to reinforce the Moskalenky group. Both parties agreed to conclude armistice for 24 hours.¹⁵

The Omsk agreement was a master stroke of diplomatic skill of the Bolsheviks, which had a profound effect upon the thinking of the Moscow military men. Omsk was saved. It could be built into a fortress capable of repelling any attempt of the Czechs to break through towards Irkutsk. Alleging negotiations with Moscow and Irkutsk the Omsk Bolsheviks then coaxed the trustful Czechs into extending the armistice agreement day by day until June first, while launching a fresh mobilization drive among the prisoners of war and concentrating into the city manpower from the entire region in the meantime. It was estimated that during these intervening five days the Bolshevik garrison in Omsk increased by about 3,000 men, receiving a great number of machine guns and field pieces from all over Central Siberia.¹⁶ The Czech side made a bad bargain. By agreeing not to build their position through reinforcements from Petropavlovsk and Cheliabinsk the Czechs bartered away a great opportunity to strike and capture Omsk. However, the Czechs lived up to the agreement.

In the meantime, Moscow was making every effort to crush the Czechs. To make sure that the Railway Administration would not co-operate with, and yield to, the Czechs Commissar of Transportation Nievsky sent the following cable all along the *Magistral* on May 26 at 1 P.M.:

"Further to my order No. 1151 of May 25. All railway personnel is strictly forbidden to yield to the pleading of the Czechs and to the transportation orders issued by them. (1) no locomotives must be given to them; (2) should a locomotive be seized a railway accident must be instigated to prevent its further movement; (3) the Czechs must not be allowed to use telephone or telegraph; (4) no supplies

must be sold to them; (5) any other assistance rendered to them will be severely punished."¹⁷

As the situation appeared on May 26 the Czechs seemed checkmated on all sides. The failure to capitalize upon the victory at Marianovka and to strike against Omsk encouraged Moscow into believing that the Czechs could be cut off from the east, arrested in Central and Eastern Russia, and annihilated by attacks from all sides. There was no outlet left for them. Their failure to take Omsk proved to be the most far-reaching single mistake committed by the Czechs at the very outset of the armed confrontation which had to be paid for dearly in blood when Captain Hanus finally saw through their game and launched an attack upon Omsk on June 2, which fell on June 7.¹⁸

But Hanus was not responsible for this mistake. His position was complicated by the obstinate opposition of Major Guinet to military operations against Omsk. This Frenchman played directly into the hands of the Omsk Bolsheviks by siding with them against the Czechs. For him the Bolsheviks appeared reasonable; they wished to negotiate. The Czechs, on the other hand, proved irresponsible hot heads whose rash actions would upset their own exit from Russia. Participating in a conference with the Bolsheviks and the Czechs in Omsk on May 31, this was presided over by American Consul Thomson, Major Guinet had the following to say to the ultimatum which was received from Hanus in the meantime, who was tired of negotiations and demanded the Omsk Bolsheviks to surrender. Cabled Guinet to Hanus:

"To the Czechs at Izil-Kul. Your action forces the French Mission to wash its hands of this affair. It will be a disgrace for the Czechs to become involved in Russian difficulties. If the Czechs persist in their activities, everything must end between them and the French Government. The Czechs must take no action whatever until the French Mission (which was leaving Omsk immediately) arrives in Izil-Kul."¹⁹

The capture of Omsk was the real clue to the east. Omsk

controlled the entire unfolding Czech-Bolshevik conflict. Captain Hanus could not have known that on the very day when he had routed the Bolsheviks at Marianovka, on May 25, his colleague, Captain Gajda, opened the way to Vladivostok on the eastern flank between Omsk and Irkutsk. Gajda seized Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk on that day. Had Hanus captured Omsk and then joined hands with Gajda east of Omsk then the whole line from Cheliabinsk to Vladivostok would have been free on May 25. Once Omsk was in the hands of the Czechs it would have been a sheer madness on the part of Trotsky to drive the Bolsheviks in Penza and Cheliabinsk against them because both groups could easily combine and thrust through Omsk towards Irkutsk. As will presently be seen, these two Soviets were anyway steadily refusing to execute Trotsky's and Aralov's orders, procrastinating since May 21 until May 28. But Omsk remained in the hands of the Bolsheviks for another two weeks. This was a long, long time, in terms of the swiftly developing combinations and possibilities Russia was pregnant within during third week of May 1918.

FALL OF PENZA

Penza in fourth week of May 1918 was an epitome of the predicament of the Bolshevik rule. In a nutshell it truly reflected the tremendous odds which the Bolsheviks struggled against with audacity, skill and determination to maintain themselves in power. The gap between their tasks and the available resources was just awesome. On May 25, when Trotsky ordered to shoot every Czech caught with a rifle in hand, the Penza Soviet could put into the field only 700 men against 2,300 Czech troops sitting tightly in their trains at the railway station, finger on the trigger.²⁰ True, the Bolsheviks could bring reinforcements from other places and, indeed, they increased their total strength to about 2,500 men a few days later. But this increase could not tip the adverse balance because the Czechs also could improve their position by bringing into Penza additional 5,000 men from stations east and west of that city.

In this setting, the Penza Soviet laboured hard to comply with Aralov's and Trotsky's orders. Surely, taken as an isolated instance and strictly on the balance of local manpower,

it would have been sheer folly to expect the Bolsheviks in Penza to outfight the Czechs. But their over-all chances were not so hopeless, and Trotsky's orders to them so irresponsible, as some critics of Trotsky point out.²¹ The manpower was only one of many factors of a complex over-all balance of power between the two parties. Trotsky and his men had, however, a very good assessment of the other factors at play and based their orders upon these in driving the Penza Bolsheviks against the Czechs. One of these factors was the Bolshevik control of the entire railway line from Penza to Vladivostok once Omsk had been saved; this was their greatest strategic advantage. If the railway was interrupted at several places then the Czech trains could be pinned down, isolated into small groups and then harassed through sorties until hunger and general wear and tear broke down the spirit of the troops, consumed their energy, and dissipated their organization. It appeared inconceivable that the three army groups, the Penza group of 8,000 men, the Cheliabinsk group of 8,800 men and the Irkutsk group of 3,700 men, separated by hundreds of miles, could ever join hands and fight their way through thousands of miles of enemy territory without any supporting base. In addition, Omsk was being built into a bastion to cut off the Czechs from the east, and to entrap them in Central and Eastern Russia. Finally, the military position of the Bolsheviks had greatly improved during April and May due to a large influx of Internationalists into their forces.

Leaving aside for the moment these over-all strategic considerations the situation in Penza, as an isolated instance, was adverse to the Bolsheviks. And here lies the main cause of peace being preserved in Penza long after the fighting had flared up in many places. Another factor contributing to the preservation of tranquillity in Penza was the unwillingness of the Czechs to assert their numerical superiority: they continued hoping that the Penza Soviet in face of this superiority could not but yield to their efforts at a mere renewal of their movement. It was precisely this imbalance in manpower which made both parties negotiate. The Bolsheviks in Penza drew the Czechs into negotiations in order to gain time and assistance from other Soviets. The Czechs, on the other hand, negotiated from the position of strength. The Czechs hoped that by displaying restraint and by

bringing to bear upon the Bolsheviks the threat of superiority of their forces, these would realize the futility of attempts at detaining them and the dangers entailed in such attempts. Another factor working in favour of peace in Penza was the long distance separating Penza from the congress in Cheliabinsk, the lack of communication between the PEC and the Command of the First Division in Penza, and the vagueness of instructions which had been sent to Penza by Colonel Vojtechovsky on May 23. The delicate relations between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks in Penza, following Aralov's cable of May 23, could be fully appreciated only against this background.

Aralov's cables of May 21 and May 23 put the Bolsheviks in Penza into a very difficult position. As the Chairman of the Penza Soviet, Commissar Kuraviev, was out of town, Kuraviev had left Penza for Saratov with an armed expedition on May 17 to give hand in suppressing an uprising of the Cossacks, the matter of Aralov's cables fell into the hands of the Chairman of Gubernial Soviet, Commissar Minikin. The Gubernial and the Penza City Soviets had already several times dealt with the situation and decided that with the forces on hand it would be suicidal to attempt to disarm the Czechs. True, the mobilization against them was under way for some time but a substantial part, about 800 men, of manpower thus mobilized had been lent to the Saratov Bolsheviks.²² Whatever remained in Penza amounted to about 700 men, the First Revolutionary Regiment of the Czech Communists contributing 450 men.²³ Against this number the Army Corps in Penza had 2,000 troops, the rest being within reach. Minikin took up the matter directly with Aralov over the telegraph. He argued that the Penza Bolsheviks cannot carry out his orders under the prevailing conditions, that the local sources of manpower had long been exhausted, and that unless fresh reinforcements were sent by Moscow no action against the Czechs could be taken. Exactly what Aralov told Minikin is not clear. It seems that he refused to send any reinforcements to Penza and pressed Minikin into carrying out his orders with whatever forces on hand, or which could be assembled.²⁴

But Minikin was quite an independent man who knew better than Aralov and, in order to buttress his position against the hard pressing Director of the Department of Operations.

of the Commissariat of War, decided to solicit the support of Lenin. It was a tremendous responsibility to attack the Czechs in order to force upon them disarmament, and Minikin wished to have the highest authority appraised about the danger such a step entailed. On May 25 he appealed to Lenin by a cable. The record fails to give details of what Minikin said to Lenin, except that he explained the critical situation of the Penza Bolsheviks and requested Lenin to send him Latvian Guards. Exactly how Lenin responded to Minikin's plea is also not known. It seems that Lenin's answer was channelled through the Department of Operations of Trotsky's Commissariat and that it entailed the following points: no immediate assistance was promised; Minikin was authorized to approach the Soviets far and wide, and, in the name of the Central Government to extract from them any troops they could spare; the Czech units must be disarmed and dissolved within two days.²³

Lenin's answer must have been received sometime in early hours of May 26 because Minikin, since 4.27 A.M. of that day, sat at the telegraph soliciting assistance on all sides. His first cable went at 4.27 to Ruzaievka:

"To the Soviet in Ruzaievka. Very urgent. Strictly confidential. All your available forces, fully armed, must immediately be sent by a special train to Penza to be given to the disposal of the Penza Soviet. The number to be sent, as well as the time of their departure, must be telegraphed at once. Minikin."²⁴

A similar cable was sent all around: at 4.40 again to Ruzaievka; at 4.41 to Saransk; at 5.03 to Tambov; at 5.09 to Saratov; at 5.40 to Samara; at 6.20 to Syzran; and at 6.30 to Simbirsk. The Soviet in Saratov was requested immediately to return the 800 men of the Penza detachment operating in Saratov under Kuraviev's command. Minikin warned that this request had been approved by Aralov himself. The Soviet in Samara was urged at once to execute Trotsky's order No. 388 calling for disarmament and dissolution of Czech units; after the task was executed all forces must be sent to Penza. Minikin's cable to Samara concluded with a warning that the situation was deadly serious; there can be no excuses and no

delays as the danger of the Czechs seizing the entire railway network was real and imminent. Also the Soviet in Syzran was urged to execute Order No. 388 and thereafter send all available troops to Penza.²⁷

Early afternoon of May 26 Minikin again telegraphed to all these stations. Now he requested them to report what forces had been sent because he must prepare a comprehensive report for Moscow. The results were not encouraging. The Military Commander of the Saratov Soviet, Commissar Schwartzmann, told Minikin that there were no forces in Saratov he could spare. He suggested that assistance be sought from Uyezds of Kuznieck, Serdobsk, Atkar and Rtischevo; but, above all from Aralov. Moscow had plenty of forces on hand and should send them. All what Saratov could do was to return the Penza group.²⁸ Minikin was not very happy with these results and connected himself over the telegraph with the Military Commander of Simbirsk Gubernia Commissar Ivanov:

"I am appealing to you upon orders of the Soviet of the Penza Gubernia. According to Trotsky's order No. 338 we have to disarm all Czechoslovak units and to arrest their officers. In Penza we have over 2,000 Czechs, armed also with machine guns. Our forces are rather small; recently we have dispatched an armed train of 800 men with machine guns and artillery to the front (Saratov, *Ed.*). Trotsky's order must be executed today or tomorrow. The attempt to disarm the Czechs will result in a conflict. We have been authorized by Moscow to request from you all assistance you could spare.

Ivanov. There are not many spare men here. Our men went against Dutov, about 700 of them. I can send to you only a detachment of Internationalists, with two machine guns. The unit is small but reliable, altogether 90 men. Perhaps I could send you another 100 men . . . What are your forces in Penza?

Minikin. I beg you to send us all that you can spare and collect in the Uezd. In Penza we have some 700 men, but reinforcements are promised from other places . . .

Ivanov. All right. We shall send you the unit of the Third International and another 100 men; perhaps we also

could collect something in the Uiezd . . ."¹⁹

Shortly after this conversation Minikin convened a strategy meeting of the Penza Gubernial Soviet, the Penza City Soviet, the Command of the Czech Red Army and the leadership of the Czech Communist Party. The meeting was to consider the situation in light of assistance which had been promised by several Soviets. Opening the meeting Minikin reported that the results were not encouraging. The troops on hand, plus all promised assistance, would come to about 2 500 men. This number was still no match for the Czechs. The meeting then decided that under the prevailing conditions Aralov's and Trotsky's orders cannot be executed. It was further resolved that Moscow must again be requested for reinforcements; these could reach Penza within 30 hours. The Czech Communists placed on the record their scepticism about open combat with available forces. The cable then sent by Minikin to Trotsky, in reporting upon this meeting, must have been a sad reading for the impatient Commissar of War.

What happened in Moscow upon the receipt of Minikin's report we may only guess. It seems that a conference was held in the Department of Operations and that the entire situation was reviewed anew, particularly in view of the negligible assistance Minikin had been promised by the nearby Soviets. Obviously, the Bolshevik military leaders in Moscow must have realized that the manpower resources of the local Soviets had been exhausted by dispatch to various fronts of civil war, and that in view of the critical situation obtaining in Penza Moscow's assistance to Minikin was in order. Another point discussed at this conference was the scepticism of the Czech Communists in Penza, and it seems that the Moscow leaders of the Czech Communists, who participated in the meeting in the War Commissariat, had to hear unpleasant things from Aralov. One of them, A. Muna, at once called Penza and requested to speak with his colleagues there. The receiver was attended by a Czech Communist Hetz. Muna told him that he was speaking from a meeting with Aralov and instructed him that the Czechs in Penza must stop procrastinating and at once seize and imprison all officers of the Army Corps, particularly Medek, Eisenberger, Cecek and David.²⁰ Another message,

which originated at this meeting, was the following reply of Trotsky to Minikin:

"May 26. Moscow. Comrades. Military orders must not be discussed but obeyed. Any military Commander who cowardly evades executing the order calling for the disarmament and dissolution of the Czechoslovak units will be court-martialed by me. We made arrangements here whereby armed trains were dispatched to you. Now the matter lies in your hands. You must act immediately and resolutely. Trotsky."³¹

Although Minikin mobilized the entire province and fortified the city, he dreaded the moment he would have to strike. Shortly after the strategy meeting and his cable to Trotsky he invited Lenfeld and Medek for a conference. It was still May 26. What a change the Czech delegates noticed upon entering the office of the local Soviet, since March the scene of numerous and unpleasant encounters with the Bolsheviks, particularly with the toughest of them, Commissar Kuraviev.

Minikin now received them in a most cordial manner; he served tea and pirogy and offered cigarettes. He literally begged his guests to understand his difficult position with regard to his superiors in Moscow and pleaded with them to convince the troops of the necessity of executing Maxa's disarmament order. Maxa was the supreme authority for the Czechs and they should obey. Minikin further said that although Trotsky ordered to dissolve all their units, he personally had sent a strong appeal to Moscow requesting him to withdraw that order. Obviously, Minikin referred to his cable to Trotsky sent to Moscow after his strategy meeting with the Czech Communists shortly before. His guests replied that they possibly could not demand from the troops to submit to Maxa's order because they felt that the order had either been fabricated or extracted from him under duress. For the present moment the Czechs would not disarm. First the authenticity of Maxa's order must be established; this would take time. As Lenfeld recorded, the delegation left Minikin with an impression that not everything was lost. If peace were preserved in Penza, then the Czechs could resume their movement in a non-militant manner. Should

the Bolsheviks place obstacles in their way the Czechs would strike. The prospects for a peaceful solution seemed good.²²

As long as Minikin was in charge of preparations of Penza Bolsheviks the relationship between them and the Czechs, although strained, did not reach the breaking point. Minikin knew that a conflict was unavoidable, but in dealing with the Czechs maintained restraint and decorum. This all changed with the return of Kuraviev to Penza from Saratov on May 26. As soon as the delegates returned to their headquarters at the railway station from the conference with Minikin in early evening, Kuraviev took charge of Czech affairs and at once sent a car to bring them for another round of talks. This time with him.

The talks started early evening of May 26 and broke off at 3 P.M. on May 27. The delegation consisted of Medek and Lensfeld speaking for the National Council, and F. Bartak representing the troops. With Kuraviev in command the office of Penza Soviet again assumed that unfriendly familiar face. Sitting behind a table Kuraviev was flanked on the left by his military assistants, on the right by sheepishly smiling Czech Communists; their entire leadership from Penza was here. As Medek recorded later Kuraviev proved "stubborn, fanatical and boring with his worn out dialectics: the bourgeois National Council, counter-revolutionary officers, traitors to the proletarian cause among the men, etc.", and demanded complete and immediate disarmament of all troops. The delegates took a strong stand. They refuted all his allegations and charged the Czech Communists with responsibility for the strained relations between them and the Bolsheviks and for whatever might happen. Lensfeld boldly accused the Soviet Government of dishonesty and double dealing in the matter of transportation. Bartak then spoke. He assured Kuraviev that the troops wished to go to France of their own free will, emphasised their readiness even to fight the way to Vladivostok, and warned Kuraviev against underestimating the feeling and determination of the troops in this matter. Kuraviev replied that he had information to the contrary, and that he and the government did not believe that the troops wished to go to France. The Czechs retorted that they would be only too glad to organize a get-together between him and the troops so that he could find out for himself. This applied also to disarmament; if the troops

agreed then the command would not object. Kuraviev, however, rejected this proposal. Here the talks ended and, as Medek recorded, the delegation left Kuraviev convinced that "blood will flow in the streets of Penza and that the Czechs must prepare for military operations."³³

It was shortly after 3 in the morning on May 27 when the delegation returned to the headquarters at the railway station. The men in the staff train did not sleep. At once a conference was held between the command of the First Division and the just returned delegates, the latter reporting upon the sad end of negotiations with Kuraviev and what this implied. The entire picture was reviewed; two facts appeared to control the situation. First, from intercepted Minikin's cables the Czechs knew that Penza would receive substantial reinforcements from several Soviets and Moscow very soon. These would adversely affect the existing balance of power. The Czech command operated a highly effective intelligence service and knew practically all steps of Penza Bolsheviks.³⁴ Some of its friends worked directly in the office of Penza Soviet and operated the telegraph. The second factor at play was the irreconcilable position taken by Kuraviev. As the situation looked early morning of May 27 the conflict appeared unavoidable and the sooner it started the better for the Czechs. Hence the Czechs must capitalize upon their temporary preponderance of power and strike first to seize Penza to resume the movement of the whole group towards Cheliabinsk. The original plan which had been worked out by the Commander of the First Division, General Kolomensky, and his Chief of Staff, Colonel Leontiev, must be discarded. Their plan was based upon an anticipation that peace in Penza would be preserved and that therefore the movement of the trains could be resumed without armed opposition of the local Bolsheviks. The plan further anticipated that if it proved impossible to transport the whole group over the railway then some units could be shipped to Cheliabinsk over rivers Volga, Kama, and Ufa and some of them could even march.³⁵ Both authors of this plan were Russian nationals, and now strongly disagreed with the decision to strike against the Bolsheviks. Although conceding to their colleagues that the Czechs could defeat the Bolsheviks locally, they could not be convinced that the troops could ever succeed in fighting their way through thousands of

miles of enemy territory. They estimated that the initial thrust might, and probably would, be successful; but they believed that the Czech army would dissipate through wear and tear soon. Strictly from a military point of view the venture now contemplated was nonsense; they refused to participate in it and disclaimed all responsibility.³⁶

The schism in the top command at this critical junction was removed at once. The Vice-Chairman of the National Council, Medek, the highest civilian authority in Penza, stripped both these officers of their posts and sent them to jail with promise to release them before the operation were launched.³⁷ Lieutenant J. Svec, a young man of 26, was then put in command of the whole Penza group and entrusted with the task of working out a plan of attack.

Before the sun began to rise over Penza Svec ordered to open the sealed cars with rifles, which had been placed there under the terms of the Penza Agreement at the beginning of April, and distribute them among the troops. He also dispatched several scouting parties to the town to obtain intelligence on the latest developments taking place in the Bolshevik camp. Then with a small group of men he selected he closed himself into the staff train and began to lay the plan of attack. The plan was finished before noon on May 27, the attack to be launched at 1 A.M. on May 28.³⁸

While the Czechs busied themselves in the morning of May 27 with military preparations the Bolsheviks searched their souls. Their manpower had not improved, and events taking place in the city and other evidence pointed out that the Czechs were going ahead with military preparations. The Bolsheviks must have realized that the irreconcilable position of Kuraviev during the negotiations on the previous night had convinced the Czechs that the break was final; this was a mistake because now they seized initiative. Another mistake made by Kuraviev was his rejection of the offer to meet the troops to put to test his claim that the troops were being misled by their leaders. It was now during this soul searching that the Czech Communists strongly asserted themselves with their unfailing and so often disproved creed that given the chance to express freely their will the troops would remain in Russia, and it was upon their insistence that Kuraviev decided to accept the offer and

approach the Czech command with a request for arranging his get-together with the troops.

A report of Military Commander of Penza Soviet, Commissar Ostrovsky, telephoned at 10 o'clock in the morning of May 27 to Moscow to Commissar Boyarsky, who was a member of Trotsky's Department of Operations, accurately depicts the military position of the two parties on that day and the reasons of why the commissars in Penza were now placing so much hope upon the forthcoming meeting of Kuraviev with the troops (Document No. 12).

This exchange of Ostrovsky with Boyarsky is of crucial importance for it throws flood of light upon the thinking of the Soviet leaders in Moscow and Penza at this late hour, and upon the extent to which their actions were prison of the fixed idea of the Czech Communists to the effect that the troops were being dragged out of Russia against their will. The Czech Communists, in spite of the public fiasco of May 2, continued to mislead the Soviet authorities by their dogmatic assertion that the troops of the Army Corps would remain in Russia and join the Red Army as soon as officers and political leadership were removed.

It will be recalled that this assertion had several times been disproved, and that if anything in the whole Czech-Bolshevik relations was certain it was precisely the determination of the troops to get out of Russia; with or without the permission of the Soviet Government and in May even with or without their own leaders. The entire record clearly bears this out. We have seen that the Czech Communists had made this assertion to Trotsky at the end of March, that this was responsible for the slowing down of the movement of the trains and that it led, in combination with other factors, i.e., the intervention of Berlin and the Allies, to their complete halt at the end of April. Then came the defeat of the Czech Bolsheviks at the Penza consultations on April 27 and at the public fiasco of May 2.

It seems that Boyarsky appreciated the extremely difficult position of the Soviet in Penza, which had been described to him by Ostrovsky on March 27, and that he shared Minikin's hope that the troops could be talked into disarming themselves at the forthcoming meeting, because their leadership would not be present.²²

SWORDS ARE CROSSED

To impress upon the troops that disarmament and placing themselves under the protection of the Soviet authorities was the only way out of their predicament, walls of Penza railway station were plastered in the morning of May 27 with huge posters of texts of Maxa's and Aralov's cables of May 21 and Trotsky's cable of May 25. The Czech Communists posted there a declaration which repeated the substance of the plans of their Bureau, operating in Stalin's Department and published on May 17 in *Prukopnik*, about the disarmament and dissolution of the Army Corps and detention in Russia of all its troops. It will be recalled that *Prukopnik* thus had disclosed the plans of the Soviet Government about the ultimate solution of the Czech Question four days in advance of the actual order of Aralov of May 21, implementing the plan. The poster of the Czech Communists read:

"To all regiments: The Russian Republic offers you the very last opportunity to make an important decision. Those of you who want to fight could join the Czechoslovak Red Army; the rest of you could join labour battalions. You all will become Russian citizens, and will enjoy full rights and privileges. Those who would not decide for either alternative would become enemies of the Russian revolution and will be dealt with accordingly . . ."¹⁰

It was under these circumstances that the Penza Soviet sent a messenger to the staff train at about 10 A.M. on May 27 to inform Medek that Kuraviev had reconsidered his suggestion inviting him to appeal directly to the troops, and that Kuraviev would appreciate if Medek organized such a meeting in the afternoon. But officers and political leadership, except Medek, must not participate.

It was most unlikely that now the Czechs would meet Kuraviev's request in view of the preparations carried out since the return of their delegation from the abortive negotiations with him at 3 A.M. on previous night. The night session had decided that the situation deteriorated to the point of no return and Lieutenant Svec, now in command of Penza group, was finishing a plan of attack; in fact, his preparations for the operations were in full swing. In view of this, the Czech

leaders were in a frame of mind of rejecting any attempts of the Bolsheviks to draw them into negotiations because these would be a loss of time playing into their hands anyway. There was no use in organizing a mass meeting of troops at this late hour; it could even be an ambush. The unarmed troops, assembled in one place, could easily be encircled by the Red Army and brought to submission through machine guns. Moreover, the troops were impatient and opposed any further negotiations with the Bolsheviks, evident from a message sent by Lieutenant Jan Gajer, Assistant Commander of the radical Fourth Regiment, to Medek on May 26:

"Dear Medek! I am surprised at your policy of continuous negotiations with the Bolsheviks, a policy which brought you to the end of a blind alley. There is no more room for you to manoeuvre. I want to impress upon you that you are straining the patience of the troops to the extreme. When the Bolsheviks in Moscow arrested Maxa you should have arrested all leaders of the Penza Soviet and the entire command of the Red Army. Then you should have given them an ultimatum: if Maxa is not released we cut them to pieces. I am sure that this would have worked . . . Please put some stiffness in your dealing with the Bolsheviks . . . Maxa's cable is either a forgery, or it was forced upon him. Let our regiment come to Penza, we set the matters straight there and the movement of our trains will be resumed at once. Stop negotiating and behave as soldiers . . ."41

But this picture on the Czech side radically changed with the arrival of Lieutenant Cecek in Penza before noon on May 27. It will be recalled that Cecek commanded the most radical of all regiments, the Fourth, and that in Cheliabinsk he had been elected to the Military Collegium and placed in command of the entire Penza group. At a meeting held immediately after his arrival Cecek suggested that the plan prepared by Svec should not be executed until more troops were brought to Penza and to gain time. The Bolsheviks should be delayed by negotiations and Kuraviev invited to address the troops. In the meantime Cecek would go to his regiment,

deployed west of Penza on the line Serdobsk-Rtischevo, secure locomotives and then appear at the gates of Penza with all his five fully armed trains. By that time the issue would be clear. Seeing at the mass meeting the determination of the troops Kuraviev might yield and drop his opposition to their departure from Penza. Should, however, Kuraviev fail to appreciate the real situation then military operations would be mounted according to the plan prepared by Svec, with additional participation of the full Fourth Regiment. To facilitate the negotiations with the Bolsheviks the meeting then decided to set up a negotiating team, called the Workers' Committee. This consisted of men without rank and of proletarian background, each train sending one member. This committee, truly representing the troops, would be in charge of all political questions in dealing with the Bolsheviks. The meeting then approved Cecek's plan and informed Kuraviev that the rally would be held in the afternoon at 4 o'clock at a meadow behind the railway station. Cecek then left Penza.⁴²

The record of the rally held in the afternoon of May 27 makes a most interesting reading. While Minikin had been handling the Czechs with tact, Kuraviev after his return from Saratov was completely dominated by the assessments of the Czech Communists and now poured over the troops assembled on the meadow a tirade of lies and abuse. As Kuraviev had wished no officer was present, except for Medek; but he did not address the rally. Kuraviev began by stating that on the previous night he had negotiated with the National Council until three in the morning, but with no results. During those negotiations it was again confirmed that the Council betrayed the interests of the troops and that the officers were their greatest enemies. It was an unpardonable crime to drag the troops to France against their will and to sell them to French capitalism. Kuraviev further said that he had evidence showing that the Council played with the troops a foul game, particularly with regard to the convocation of the congress. The Council had promised to hold it in Piriatina, then in Penza. Now the congress was postponed indefinitely in order to prevent the men from freely expressing their will. This patent lie was too much for the troops to take and Kuraviev was silenced by cries that he was a scoundler and that the congress was actually

being held in Cheliabinsk. But Kuraviev went right ahead. He said that the Bolsheviks will go against Germany again, but after a *peredyskha*, after consolidation of their forces. Lenin himself liked and appreciated the qualities of the Czech army and Kuraviev would use all his influence upon Lenin, who was his good friend said Kuraviev, to make sure that the Czechs received best treatment after joining the Red Army. It was unfortunate that such a fine force was willing to serve capitalism. The last and most important point of his address, his demand that the Czechs voluntarily disarm and dissolve their organization, was submerged in a tumultuous opposition. Kuraviev was silenced.

For the troops J. Kral answered Kuraviev. He dismissed his story about the Council as a pack of lies and said that it would be suicidal for the Bolsheviks to continue their attempt at retaining the troops in Russia. To go to France was their unbending will, and the Bolsheviks better take notice of this. He warned that it would be fatal for the Bolsheviks to attempt to attack them.

The last speaker to address the rally was a member of Penza Soviet, Commissar Liebermann. His address was a pitiful picture of the state of mind of the Soviet leaders, showing how far removed they were from the reality of the day. Liebermann said that the National Council had sold the troops to Russian Tsar and then to western imperialists. The Bolsheviks had information that the Army Corps would never reach France because its real destination was black Africa. The Czech troops will not fight Germany; they would be used to suppress the rebellious African people striving for freedom. Then he began to say that, actually, it were the American millionaires who financed this plot of world imperialists in which the Czechs were to play such a sad role. But the sentence was drowned in cries "throw him down", and general confusion followed. At this moment a violent spring thunderstorm hit the rally and the troops, as well as the speakers, ran for shelter.⁴² Thus ended the meeting in which the 'Bolsheviks' placed so much hope.

While the troops went to listen to Kuraviev their political and military leaders planned future course of action. The report received from the rally indicated that Kuraviev was

adamant in demanding the disarmament of troops and their dissolution; Cecek was wrong in expecting Kuraviev to yield after seeing the troops rejecting his demands. In view of this latest development the command decided to mount a number of security measures while waiting for the arrival of the Fourth Regiment under Cecek, and before the attack could be launched. All units in Penza were put on alert, armed sentries posted at each car, men ordered to service their rifles and machine guns, and finally ammunition and food rations were distributed. Several scouting parties left for the city to ascertain and report upon the latest deployment of Bolshevik forces. From reports just received it appeared that the Bolsheviks turned the city into a fortress: approaches to the city were fortified, barricades erected in the streets, a number of buildings surrounded with barbed wire, and machine guns and field pieces deployed.

In midst of all these preparations in the evening of May 27 Kuraviev once again sent a messenger requesting the Czech command to send to his office a 'delegation for another round of negotiations. The Czechs obliged and the Workers' Committee, which had been set up in the morning, went. It was a grim encounter, both parties knowing that the conflict was unavoidable. It was a bargain for time on both sides. Kuraviev said that negotiations were still possible, provided that the Czechs abstained from taking any rash action, but first they must disarm. Also the Czechs played for time. They insisted upon free exit from Russia, to be executed on the basis of the Penza disarmament agreement. They would negotiate, provided that the existing *status quo* of forces was preserved. The Bolsheviks should cease their mobilization drive and desist from bringing into Penza reinforcements from all sides. Kuraviev promised.⁴⁴ Except for this fancy fencing to gain time, so essential for both parties, no other item was negotiated. Both parties broke off the negotiations feeling that though the conflict was inevitable it was not imminent, and that each side had gained enough time to strengthen its hand to strike at the adversary first.

The *status quo* agreed upon in the evening of May 27 did not last long. At 7 o'clock in the morning of May 28 an armed train with Bolshevik troops steamed into the Penza station and

stopped opposite a train of the Second Battalion of the First Regiment of the Army Corps. The Bolshevik train carried three armed automobiles and was heavily armed with machine guns and several field pieces. Before Lieutenant Svec could appear on the spot to assess the situation a group of his men called upon him in his car. The incident was a clear violation of the *status quo* agreement and Svec ordered the seizure of the train at once; but no firearms must be used. The task was executed by men of the Fifth Company and only bayonets went into action; the train was secured without a shot. The Chinese crew on the locomotive was bayoneted, the rest run away without resistance.

The news that the Czechs had seized a whole armed train hit the population in the city like a storm. The City Soviet telephoned to the Czechs for an explanation. It was told that the arrival of the train violated the *status quo* agreement and that it had been seized as a security measure. While the Soviet abstained from making any big issue out of this incident, probably not to provoke the Czechs into an immediate attack, the town was put on a war footing. Emergency signals of factory sirens called the workers to rally at factory yards, who were then formed into workers' militia units, armed and deployed into various parts of the city. The city was sealed, the Czech scouting parties in town seized and imprisoned.

Kuraviev then surveyed the situation and realized that should the Czechs strike now, before he was able to finish the mobilization of factory workers and before the promised assistance arrived, it appeared certain to him that the Soviet would fall. With Penza in their hands, the Czechs would be able to extend their control over a large portion of territory of south Russia, which in turn would greatly affect the Soviet rule in the whole country. Unless he received reinforcements at once the prospects were grim.

The Soviet rule was in a mortal danger. At 10.41 A.M. on May 28 he shared this thought with his colleagues:

"To all Uiezd and Volost Soviets. The Soviet rule is in a mortal danger. Not only the fate of the Penza Soviet is at stake, but the fate of Soviet rule in Saratov, Samara, and in all Russia. Organize military formations and send them to

Penza. Otherwise all what has been achieved so far will be lost. Send your men even without arms, they will be armed here. The Czechs probably will not be able to carry away all arms we have here. Kuraviev."⁴⁵

In view of the rapid pace of developments taking place on the Bolshevik side, evident from the hustle and bustle in the city, the operational plan of the Czechs proposed by Cecek on May 27 had to be modified. It will be recalled that the plan called for negotiations with the Bolsheviks either to convince them about the futility of their efforts at retaining the troops in Russia, or should this fail to gain time until Lieutenant Cecek appeared at the gates of Penza with five trains of the Fourth Regiment. Then the Czechs would seize the Penza station in order to resume the movement of their trains towards Cheliabinsk. But the fast pace of the Bolshevik preparations in the city convinced Svec that it might be too dangerous to wait for the arrival of Cecek. His trains might even be prevented from entering Penza, the Bolsheviks could attack them, or they could easily be derailed.

In this situation Svec decided that the safest course to follow would be to seize the railway station with the three armoured automobiles, which had been taken in the morning, in order to secure locomotives from the machine shops which then could be dispatched to Rtischevo to enable Cecek to bring his Fourth Regiment at once. Until Cecek arrived, Svec would not extend his operations beyond the control of the railway station. As for the rest of his plan, the units of the First Regiment available in Penza would be deployed all around the town and wait in their positions until Cecek and his troops appeared. New scouting parties had already been sent out to ascertain the terrain.⁴⁶

But peace was not preserved to allow Svec the time to wait for Cecek to arrive, and Svec had to implement his plan at once. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon on May 28 that a two-man scouting party was attacked by the Bolshevik machine gun fire behind the railway station. Svec thought that this might herald the beginning of an attack and therefore launched his plan. The station was seized without much resistance and the ten locomotives secured then dispatched to Rtischevo. Other troops fanned out to encircle the city from the south, east and north. But the contact with the enemy was not established. It

appeared soon that this was not an all-out Bolshevik attack and, therefore, Svec would not enlarge his action to precipitate a full conflict at this time. Cecek's troops were needed. Small skirmishes and sporadic firing followed all afternoon, and shortly before the sun set the Bolsheviks opened an artillery barrage against the railway station. Early in the afternoon Kuraviev telephoned inviting a delegation for fresh negotiations; the talks would be conditional upon an immediate disarmament of the troops and upon surrender of all officers as hostages. Lieutenant Svec plainly told him that he must be crazy and hung up on him.⁴⁷ Although sporadic firing cracked all afternoon, at this stage neither party wished a head on collision, and that this really was avoided for some time.

In the evening even these stray shots died away and an oppressive silence covered the scene. No man slept on either side; both parties expected reinforcements. The Czech trains were the first to arrive, and this sealed the fate of the Penza Bolsheviks. At one o'clock after midnight on May 29 the first train of the Fourth Regiment appeared against the dark sky at the railway station; it was the Third Battalion. At 3 o'clock the second train appeared; this was the Second Battalion. At 3.30 the staff train arrived, and a few minutes before 4 o'clock the supply train. The train of the First Battalion failed, however, to appear, and the operations had to start without it. The troops of the Fourth Regiment quietly disembarked and deployed into the positions already occupied by comrades from the First Regiment according to the plan of Svec. The plan envisaged a three-wing operation. The southern group was commanded by Lieutenant Hruza, the middle section, in the east, by Corporal Jezvina, and the northern flank by Lieutenant Vozenilek. The attack was to start at 4 A.M. on May 29 upon firing a red rocket signal.⁴⁸ Cecek's trains arrived just in time.

Also the Bolshevik command regrouped during the night, deploying the men into positions facing the Czechs. Since the report of Ostrovsky to Boyarsky on May 27, estimating all Bolshevik forces in Penza to come to about 700 troops, the Penza Soviet improved its manpower by new arrivals. But the greatest contribution to the improved military position of the Penza Bolsheviks was made by factory workers, civilians, and

prisoners of war, who were armed and deployed against the Czechs. As the situation stood at four in the morning on May 29 the Penza Soviet commanded about 3,000 men: the Internationalists contributing 550, the Czech Communists 800, and the Latvian Guard 100 men.⁴⁹ Thus over 50 per cent of the Bolshevik forces in Penza consisted of foreign nationals, the remaining 50 per cent of Russian nationals having a large share of factory workers mobilized on the last day. The chief command was placed into Kuraviev's hands, Strombach commanded the Czech Communists and a Czech J. Pospisil the whole Bolshevik artillery. The Bolsheviks had a tremendous fire power: over 400 machine guns, a great number of field pieces, and an enormous supply of rifles, ammunition and hand grenades.⁵⁰ Most of this equipment originally belonged to the Second Czech Division, which had disarmed in Penza at the end of March.

The Czech forces amounted to 3,550 men. They consisted of 2,300 men originally stationed in Penza and 1,250 troops of the Fourth Regiment who had arrived during the night.⁵¹ With regard to fire power, the Czechs were no match for the Bolsheviks. The seizure of the armed train on the previous day brought the number of their machine guns to 26, and the Fourth Regiment brought another 14. The ratio in fire power, in machine guns alone, was 1:10. Another disadvantage on the Czech side were the exterior lines, their forces being spread thin over a large territory. The Bolsheviks defended themselves in a barricaded city; they had practically no logistical problems.

It was a strange coincidence that exactly, to a second, at 4.00 A.M., when the Czechs mounted their assault, Kuraviev was reviewing the entire situation for last time and handed over to his telegraphist the following cable to be dispatched to Moscow. It was clocked 4 A.M.:

"Penza, May 29, 4 A.M. To the Central Soviet, Moscow. Situation serious. The Czechs encircled the whole Penza. The Soviet probably will fall. Send reinforcements at once. Kuraviev."⁵²

The stage was set. It was a bloody spectacle and a fratricidal war which was enacted in Penza on May 29. The fight lasted

full 8 hours. The Czechs seized the centre of the city, called the Acropolis, exactly at 12 noon. The Bolshevik reinforcements from Moscow arrived too late, appearing on the horizon only at 2 P.M., and then fast disappeared. The Czechs lost 30 men; about 100 were wounded. The Bolsheviks lost well over 300 men; out of these 128 were Czech Communists. Over 2,000 Bolsheviks were captured, among them two members of Penza Gubernial Soviet, Commissars Kozlov and Liebersohn. Kuraviev, Muna and Strombach, escaped. Over 200 Czech Communists and almost their entire high command was captured: Skotak, Synek, Mottl, Ocenasek, and Pospisil. On the whole, the Czech Communists proved bravest defenders of the city. The troops seized a number of field pieces, several hundred machine guns and thousands of rifles, large supply of ammunition and hand grenades, and several automobiles. A huge building with food and provisions was secured without damage.⁵³

Lieutenant Svec then issued the following declaration to the city population on May 29:

"To all citizens:

- (1) The Czechoslovaks do not intend to organize a political upheaval in Russia.
- (2) They will not assume the government control in Penza.
- (3) They will leave Penza as soon as further movement of their trains can be renewed.
- (4) Murder and loot will be severely punished.

Lieutenant Svec."⁵⁴

The captured Bolsheviks posed a great problem to the Czech Command. Particularly shocking was the high percentage of foreign nationals in the ranks of the Red Army. Also the captured Czech Communists posed a delicate problem. The issue was dealt with by a newly elected Provisional Executive Committee, similar to that which had been elected by the congress in Cheliabinsk, which now assumed charge of all political and military aspects of operations of the Penza group. The Committee adopted on May 29 the following rules to be

followed by all Czech units and cabled them along the line up to Cheliabinsk:

"I. *Russian nationals.* After the departure of our last train these will be set free, provided that they promise not to join any force against us.

II. *Germans and Hungarians*

- (a) Those who fought against us will be shot.
- (b) Those who did not will be set free. A selected number of them will be retained for espionage work and propaganda purposes.

III. *Czechs*

- (a) *Not formerly in the Army Corps.* (1) Those who surrendered without fighting will be treated as Russian nationals; they will be set free. Should they wish, they could join the Army Corps. (2) Those captured fighting will be handled as Germans and Hungarians (Point IIa).
- (b) *Former members of the Army Corps.* (1) Those who surrendered without fight, this is an extenuating circumstance, will be handed over to the military court of their former unit. (2) Those captured while fighting will be handed over to the military court of their former unit and treated as traitors who engaged in fratricide . . .⁵⁵

The order was mercilessly executed at once. Shortly after the fall of Penza the Internationalists captured in the building of the Gubernial Soviet, this was last to fall, were shot at its courtyard. Another group of Internationalists, captured while fighting the Czechs, was taken out of the town to a nearby forest and shot. No numbers are available.⁵⁶

The next day the Czechs buried their dead. The entire city participated. As one observer recorded, it was an unforgettable spectacle. Many Russians kissed the blood-stained uniforms of the fallen men, because the defeat of the Bolsheviks and the

end of their terror brought a new hope and a new life to the people.

In the meantime, Lieutenant Cecek assumed the command of the whole Penza group and ordered to move forward as soon as the First Battalion of the Fourth Regiment should arrive in Penza from Rtischevo. The Battalion had practically been wiped out by the Bolshevik reinforcements converging upon Penza from Moscow and from the Saratov front on previous night. These were the troops for which the Bolsheviks in Penza had been so impatiently waiting. The First Battalion had been caught by two trains of Latvians arriving from Saratov, about 1,000-1,500 of them, and by two trains of reinforcements arriving from the Tambov side, also about 1,500 men. Had these troops arrived in Penza in time, a day earlier, Kuraviev would have commanded over 6,000 men.

The badly decimated First Battalion finally appeared, and the entire army group left Penza during the night from May 30 to 31. The rear end of the train column was protected by an armoured train *Groznyi*, the Formidable. The armoured train collected the last sentries and dismantled the railway line each three miles or so to prevent the Bolsheviks from engaging in hot pursuit. The Penza group rolled towards the east. The Czechs won an important victory.

Looking back at the checkered course of events in Penza since May 25 the over-all chances of the Bolsheviks to subdue the Czechs in Penza were by no means small. True, the Bolsheviks started with a force much inferior to that of the Czechs, but in course of three days received assistance from all sides. The factory workers and prisoners also much augmented Kuraviev's hand. It will be recalled that before the actual fight broke out at 4 A.M. on May 29 the manpower of both parties was about equal: 3,000 Bolsheviks against 3,550 Czechs. But other advantages favoured the Bolshevik side. The Bolsheviks enjoyed 10:1 superiority in machine gun fire, had interior lines, and expected reinforcements arrived in Penza in time, there is little doubt that the 6,000 Bolsheviks could have put up a tough fight.

The clue to the victory of the Czechs appears to lie in the initiative displayed by Lieutenant Svec on May 28, in his seizure of the railway station and then in the dispatch of the ten loco-

SWORDS ARE CROSSED

motives to Rtischevo to bring reinforcements. Without the 1,250 men of the Fourth Regiment the Czech side had in Penza only 2,200 men against over 3,000 Bolsheviks. Kuraviev should have attacked before the Fourth Regiment arrived; that was his time.

Another element which contributed to the victory of the Czechs was the failure of Kuraviev to dismantle the railway line in order to prevent Svec from bringing in the Fourth Regiment. He could have ordered the Rtischevo Soviet to dismantle the line. But he himself expected reinforcements to come over this very line and hoped that his troops would arrive before the Czechs; therefore the line remained intact. The initiative of Svec, however, ruined his calculations. It was a close race and Kuraviev lost only by a few hours, which sealed the fate of the Penza Bolsheviks. Why then the Bolshevik trains came late?

Shortly after the trains of the Fourth Regiment had left Rtischevo in the evening on May 28, four Bolshevik trains with about 2,000 to 3,000 men, two trains from Saratov and two from Tambov, appeared approaching Rtischevo. These would either have arrived in Penza at the same time with the trains of the Fourth Regiment or, perhaps, they would have engaged them already on the way. Either development would have improved Kuraviev's chances in Penza. But all these Bolshevik reinforcements were routed by only one Battalion of the Fourth Regiment at Rtischevo.⁵⁷ The bulk of the regiment, 1,250 men, entered Penza in early hour of May 29 and brought the total strength of Svec's forces to 3,550 troops. Now the manpower equalled. The firepower superiority of the Bolsheviks and the advantages of their interior lines were overcome by skill of the Czech troops. All were seasoned soldiers, while Kuraviev commanded a number of heterogeneous groups of men with little training and military experience. Another element contributing to the victory of the Czech arms was the imaginative plan of attack prepared by Svec. The Czechs mounted their attack by opening fire in the middle section of the front. One of the seized armoured automobiles was loaded with explosives and sent with no driver, but blazing from its machine guns, against the Bolshevik lines. The explosion of the car caused havoc among the Bolsheviks and made them to regroup in anti-

cipation that the main thrust of the Czechs would attempt to widen the breach in their lines caused by the car. When the Bolsheviks disarrayed their forces, the Czechs launched their main thrust on both flanks. But the fight was not easy, as the Czech command later admitted.⁵⁵

The victory of the Czechs was complete. Its most important aspect was the seizure of an enormous quantity of arms and ammunition and the capture of the railway and communication system leading towards Cheliabinsk. This was not damaged at all; the way towards the east was free. In view of the mobility which the Czechs were then able to enjoy on account of the undamaged railway line, it seems that Moscow committed a cardinal mistake in driving the Penza Bolsheviks towards a head on collision with the Czechs. Had a war of attrition been decided upon by the Moscow leaders and by Kuraviev, there is little doubt that they would have succeeded in wearing out the Czechs and then in defeating them. Perhaps the railway line should have been dismantled on both approaches to Penza, in the west as well as in the east, and the Penza group isolated from Rtischevo. Then the Czechs could have been harassed by small sorties, nibbled and gradually worn out. The Bolsheviks would have gained more time and substantial reinforcements could have been brought in from north and south by the railway lines converging in Penza from these two directions. Four railway lines branched off from Penza. But the strategic concept dominating the thinking of the Bolshevik military men at that time was the "train warfare", the partisan warfare and guerilla tactics being little used. The two most important elements of the "train warfare", the maintenance of the railway line in operational shape and the head on collisions with the enemy, ruled out any other approach to the Czech problem.

As will be seen later the failure of the Moscow strategists to capitalize upon the hundreds of miles of territory separating the Czech groups from each other, and upon the control of the railway line, coupled with Moscow's emphasis upon decisive engagements, were responsible for Bolshevik military misfortunes. The Czechs were able to defeat the Bolshevik forces in a series of *blitz* engagements and lay their hands upon the entire, and undamaged, railway and communication system between Penza and Vladivostok. In the final

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for both Gajda and his hosts. Gajda spoke for the mutiny enacted in Cheliabinsk, and Kudela and the general for the old regime, which was trying to assert its authority against the congress with the assistance of the French and the Omsk Soviet. Gajda obviously played it safe. It is quite conceivable that had he told his hosts that he was in charge of all military operations east of Omsk and planned to launch them as soon as he reached Novonikolaievsk, he could have been seized as a rebel against the established authority and imprisoned. General Shokhorov could have detained him at Omsk. But Kudela and the general knew very little about the events taking place in Cheliabinsk, and somehow Gajda was able to depart from Omsk without any difficulty, though perhaps under suspicion.⁶⁰

Shortly after Gajda's departure the situation in Omsk changed to such an extent that had Gajda been caught in the city, he certainly would not have been permitted to leave. The crisis in the National Council was precipitated by a letter received by Kudela from V. Holecek from Cheliabinsk, reporting in some detail upon the congress and its major decisions. It was a shocking surprise for Kudela and the general to learn that military operations were imminent and that Gajda was to command all units east of Omsk. A meeting to consider the situation was convened at once. Kudela and Glos participated for the National Council, General Shokhorov for the Army Corps Command, and Major Guinet with Commandant Pascal for the French Military Mission. It will be recalled that at this meeting Major Guinet emphatically declared the congress to be a mutiny, that the Army Corps must go *via* Archangelsk—this was an order of Marshal Foch—and that the National Council must be restored to its full authority. Whoever refused to obey the Council would be court-martialed. The meeting then decided to send a delegation to Cheliabinsk to break the power of the congress.

Now the assembled men realized that Gajda had outwitted them. A cable to Gajda, placing him under direct orders of General Shokhorov, was then decided upon. To make the matter quite clear to Gajda, Kudela drafted a letter to him stating "... I hope that you fully realize that you are under definite orders of the Commander of the Army Corps. In the name of the National Council I must urgently request you to

abstain from any action which might precipitate a fight. We neither want, nor can, fight the Bolsheviks. This would destroy us . . ."⁶¹ But Gajda was out of reach.

Arriving in Novonikolaievsk in the morning on May 25 Gajda was handed Shokhorov's cable, also signed by Kudela and Major Guinet. The general informed Gajda that according to Major Guinet the First Division must go *via* Archangelsk. Gajda was under direct orders of the general and must not take any actions unauthorized by him, the decisions of the congress were invalid. Should he disobey, he would be court-martialed.⁶²

Gajda disregarded the telegram and decided to call a staff meeting of his officers to review the entire situation. The conference was held shortly before noon. He briefed his commanding staff about the decisions of the congress, the plans of the Military Collegium, and that he was in command of all operations east of Omsk. He then said that on his way from Cheliabinsk he had grappled with the problem of how to implement the plan of the Military Collegium. After much thinking, the immediate commencement of military operations to secure the eastern flank appeared the only realistic solution. He read the orders received from General Shokhorov and declared that they cannot bind him. In the first place, he was under orders of the congress and must implement its decisions. Secondly, the congress had left all operational details in the hands of the three commanders. Although the renewal of the movement through negotiations was preferable, said Gajda, he did not believe that negotiations would produce results and therefore decided for military operations. The task was enormous. Gajda's proposal was discussed at length, and all officers present agreed with his assessment of the situation and the action he proposed to break the impasse. Only two officers voiced concern over the lack of time to prepare it. The debate then turned to technical details. It was agreed that the railway line west of Novonikolaievsk would be seized up to Barabinsk, and in the east up to Mariinsk. Novonikolaievsk would be captured during the night from May 25 to 26, the attack to commence at one after midnight.⁶³

Because the plan agreed upon at this staff meeting envisaged military operations in all places having troops under Gajda's

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command, he then drafted the following instructions to be dispatched to them by couriers:

“Order No. 87. May 25. To all trains on the line Omsk-Irkutsk. This is to inform you that the congress and the Army Corps authorized me to take all necessary steps in order to secure our further movement towards Vladivostok. Therefore, I hereby order an immediate mobilization of all units under my command; all my orders, and those of my subordinates, must be executed at once. The present position of your trains must be made safe. No movement of the Bolshevik armed trains must be allowed. If necessary, or if feasible, the railway stations and the nearby cities should be seized. Lieutenant Nosek will seize the station immediately west of Irkutsk in order to secure us against the Bolshevik attacks which could be mounted from Irkutsk. The telegraph must be seized, and only telegrams addressed to me handled. For the moment all passenger trains should be allowed to pass through stations under your control. They must be searched and all arms confiscated. The Artillery Brigade will send a train of Captain Koudelka to Novonikolaievsk, together with two artillery officers and 50 men . . .”⁶⁴

Gajda then drafted a special letter of instructions for the units east of Novonikolaievsk and gave them to his old friend from the Serbian Corps, Voivoda Zozic, who was on his way to Irkutsk. Gajda informed the commanders in detail about the congress and then said that during the night from May 25 to 26 the Czechs would seize Novonikolaievsk, in the west Chulym and Barabinsk and in the east Mariinsk. He suggested that two or three trains should join forces and then begin advancing upon Irkutsk. But they should halt one station or so before that city should the commander of this expedition decide that with the forces on hand it could not be taken. Gajda then urged the commanders to treat the local population with understanding and not to allow looting under any circumstances. He concluded the letter by assuring his men that he acted upon orders of the congress, and that the Penza group had been authorized to begin its forward movement already on May 24.⁶⁵

This groundwork for operations of his groups laid, Gajda

began to implement it. It will be recalled that on May 3 Gajda, with his assistant Captain Kadlec, had worked out a Plan of Action, issued Order No. 38/1, and then worked out a Secret Code to enable the command publicly, and yet secretly, to communicate with its units over the Bolshevik controlled telegraph. While it would take some time for his instructions sent through the couriers and Voivoda Zozic to reach the troops, it was not so with Captain Kadlec, stationed in Mariinsk, who could be sent into action by a coded telegraphic order. Kadlec and Gajda were closely co-operating for some time, and surely Kadlec would need no further explanations.

It was exactly at 2 P.M. on May 25 when the Bolshevik telegraphist at the railway station in Novonikolaevsk began to press the key of his sender in transmitting to Mariinsk the following Gajda's message:

"In Mariinsk station pass on to the Commissar 20, m a letter, Gajda."⁶⁸

According to the Secret Code the phrase 'to pass on to the Commissar a letter' meant to seize the station. Kadlec worked fast, and at 2.15 P.M. reported that the letter had been delivered; the Mariinsk railway station was in his hands. One armed train with the Internationalists, about 200 to 300 men and much equipment, was captured after little resistance. The telegraph office was seized and messages sent out in all directions to confuse the Soviets by stating that in Mariinsk everything was quiet.⁶⁷

Receiving a report from Kadlec that Mariinsk had fallen into Czech hands Gajda was pleased to see the initial step of his action so successful, and as he recorded in his memoirs "it was upon us in Novonikolaevsk to act".⁶⁸ Consequently, he put his men on alert, worked out a plan of attack upon the station and the city and then went to the city to survey the situation. According to intelligence just received the City Soviet was sitting all afternoon, finally deciding to attack the Czechs during the night from May 25 to 26.⁶⁹

While in town late afternoon Gajda visited the headquarters of the Secret Organization of Russian Officers, operating there for some time. This was one of many anti-Bolshevik groups

which had sprung up in almost all cities of Siberia during spring of 1918. Though not very successful in challenging the Bolshevik rule at the beginning, in course of time these groups gathered strength, made contacts with each other and began to co-operate; they even established a headquarters in Tomsk. Tomsk at that time was the main centre of political anti-Bolshevik activity in Siberia, having several members of the Constituent Assembly which had been dissolved by the Bolsheviks in January 1918. There was some sort of a nucleus of the Siberian Provisional Government functioning in that city. The rise of all these anti-Bolshevik groups was a highly significant development and coincided with the rapid decline of Bolshevik power throughout Siberia in middle of May. According to Viegman, these anti-Bolshevik groups also organized military formations, and at the end of May the number of troops under their command was considerable. In Omsk, 2,000 men, Tomsk 1,000, Taiga 60, Novonikolaievsk 600, Barnaul 250-400, Semipalatinsk 300, Krasnoyarsk 480-600, and Irkutsk 1,000. Viegman estimated that the total of anti-Bolshevik military formations in Western and Central Siberia came to about 7,000 men at the end of May.⁷⁰ Compared to about 5,000 men commanded by the Bolsheviks in those parts at that time, it will be recalled that this is Kakurin's estimate, it is apparent that an entirely new balance of forces emerged in Siberia after a short spell of Bolshevik rule. And now the Czechs were injected into this development.

In many places in Siberia the Czechs had contacts with these anti-Bolshevik elements, utilizing them as intelligence sources. The leading men of these organizations belonged mostly to the ESER Party, who had excellent contacts in Moscow; in spring of 1918 the left wing of this party was a coalition partner of the Bolsheviks. Also locally these men had influential contacts. The party had a great following in Siberia, and controlled a vast network of powerful and important Siberian Co-operatives. The anti-Bolshevik group in Novonikolaievsk was headed by Colonel Grishin-Almazov. According to Gajda's own account, Gajda met him first time on May 10, 1918. On that day a delegation of the Secret Organization of the Russian Officers, led by Grishin-Almazov, called upon Gajda in his headquarters. The details of this meeting are not

known. Gajda states that the delegates came to introduce themselves and inform him about their work. Gajda further mentions that the next contact with this organization was made on May 25, after the staff meeting of the officers approved his plan of action.⁷¹

According to an account given later by Gajda to Steidler, Gajda told the leaders of this anti-Bolshevik organization on May 25 that the Cheliabinsk congress had decided to renew the movement to Vladivostok even by force. He said that he was in command of all operations east of Omsk, and that he and his officers decided to commence them at once. During the night the Czechs would seize the Novonikolaevsk railway station and all military establishments and installations in the city. Gajda took pains to emphasize that the operation would be not against the Soviet Government; it would only deprive the local Bolsheviks of military power to prevent them from harassing the Czechs on their way to Vladivostok. He then posed a question of what the organization would do in such a situation.

The visitors expressed a great surprise at how fast the congress had arrived at such a momentous decision and voiced concern whether this could be executed immediately. They reckoned that the Bolshevik power was on the wane everywhere, but felt that such an enormous operation as contemplated should be preceded by long and thorough preparations. It would take them at least half a year of mobilizing and organizing to be able to take a meaningful stand against the Bolsheviks, they said, and then begged Gajda whether the Czechs would not postpone their operations until that time.⁷²

It is not clear how Gajda reacted to this suggestion. From his account to Steidler it seems that he dismissed it as impracticable to wait six months with the implementation of the decision of the Cheliabinsk congress. Here the record ends. But it is quite conceivable that Gajda might have hinted that he would welcome if this group took the government into its hands after the Czechs deprived the Bolsheviks of military power. It was quite clear to him that the Czechs could not take the political control and civil administration of the city into their hands. This general principle had been agreed upon by the Military Collegium on May 23, and the plan of action

worked out at the staff meeting accordingly called for the seizure of military establishments and installations only. But on the other hand it was equally clear that it would be preferable if an effective non-Bolshevik administration were set up at once to maintain order and co-operate with the Czechs. Even if such a suggestion had not been made by Gajda, then the anti-Bolshevik leaders themselves must have realized that their hour had arrived, as the Czechs would go ahead with their plan of disarming the local Soviet anyway.⁷³ However it might have been, the fact is that political and military co-operation of the Czechs with the anti-Bolshevik opposition, which became the dominant factor of Russian and Siberian political scene after the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict, can legitimately be traced to this meeting.

In late afternoon and evening Novonikolaievsk buzzed with a badly concealed activity. The City Soviet was in a continuous session until one after midnight, putting last touches to a plan of attacking the Czechs in early hours of May 26. Also the anti-Bolshevik element was on its feet, acting upon the information that the Czechs would disarm the Soviet. Feverish political negotiations were taking place behind the scenes all evening among the leading members of various political parties in order to agree upon setting up a group which would take over the civil government as soon as the Czechs assumed military control of the city. Grishin-Almazov and his colleagues from the Officers' Organization busied themselves with arming their men, stitching on the sleeves of their uniforms green-white bands, the insignia of an army group which in a few days became known as the First Novonikolaievsk Volunteer Regiment. This group of men, hurriedly banded together during the evening, was to give the armed support to the new regime to emerge in the wake of the Czech military operations. Thus the evening of May 25 could be considered a moment of inception of the Siberian Volunteer Army, which in course of time grew into a body of 300,000 men, and a moment of birth of civil war which was to devastate Siberia for almost three years.

Only the Czechs seemed calm in Novonikolaievsk. Their military band played cheerfully at the main city square all evening. This concert was a daily feast for the local population and young people in pairs, and old, moved gaily about. As

usual the concert finished at 10 P.M., and the musicians headed for their trains at the railway station. Around midnight it seemed that even the anti-Bolsheviks finished their work. The town appeared fast asleep, except for the dimmed lights in the windows of some prominent anti-Bolshevik leaders, and except for the glaring lights in the windows of the City Soviet.

Then, at 1.30 A.M., a red rocket hissed its way over the spring sky and inaugurated the fall of the Bolshevik rule in Novonikolaievsk and, for that matter, over all Siberia. In an operation lasting about 40 minutes the Czechs seized the railway station and all military establishments in the city, disarmed the Red Army men who did not flee, and assumed military control over the town. The Soviet could not finish its business for the day. Long before the Czechs fought their way to the centre of the city and to the building housing the Soviet, its members fled. This solved the delicate problem which had baffled Gajda for a while, making the assumption of power by a new regime an easy matter. As Gajda recorded, on May 26 at 4.30 in the morning, the life in Novonikolaievsk was back to normal.⁷⁴ But there was one big change. The Bolshevik power was no more. The political control of the city was assumed by the City Duma under the leadership of three men who later played a prominent role in liberated Siberia: Landberg, Sidonov and Markov. Law and order in the streets was maintained by guards sporting the green-white insignia. Anticipating the fall of Bolshevik power all over Siberia, Grishin-Almazov busied himself with a plan of setting up a Provisional Siberian Government, to assume control over the future Siberian Republic, and with organizing a Siberian Liberation Army to wage a war upon the Bolsheviks.

In the morning on May 26 Gajda issued the following declaration to the local population:

"In the moment Russia concluded armistice with Germany and Austria we decided to go to France . . . Since that time we have maintained a strict neutrality. Our patience was mistaken for weakness . . . and in the end we had to resort to arms. This appeared the only measure which could renew the movement of our trains and secure them against attacks . . . It is purely a defensive operation. In a few days

we shall be out of Russia, and you could manage your affairs as you please. But do not hamper the movement of our trains now . . . The Czechs do not wish to interfere in internal affairs of Russia. The arms were resorted to in order to renew the movement of our trains and secure ourselves against attacks which were prepared against us long in advance. Any hostile act will be crushed with force of arms . . .”⁷⁵

In a similar tone Gajda spoke on May 27 to a large gathering of railway workers, pleading with them to extend all assistance and co-operation to the Czechs so that they could leave Russia as soon as possible. The workers enthusiastically agreed. Locomotives and other railway equipment was placed at the disposal of the Czech command, and armed trains left Novonikolaievsk soon in order to assist the units operating in the east and the west.

The collapse of the Bolshevik administration in Novonikolaievsk and the assumption of the government by the City Duma had a profound effect upon future course of events in all Siberia. First to voice its concern was the PEC from Cheliabinsk. The reports reaching the PEC through Omsk Soviet maintained that in Novonikolaievsk the Czechs had deposed the Soviet Government and that the operations were political in nature. The Omsk Bolsheviks alleged that the Czechs, in alliance with all kinds of anti-Bolsheviks, were organizing a political upheaval in all Siberia. As it proved impossible for the PEC to establish a direct contact with Gajda to ascertain the truth, the Omsk Soviet controlled all Czech communications, the PEC on May 28 drafted the following letter of instructions and dispatched it to Gajda through a courier:

“We urgently request you to abstain from taking any political steps without an explicit previous approval of the PEC. The instructions agreed upon earlier (by the Military Collegium on May 23, *Ed.*) call not for the removal of the Soviet administration, but only for its disarmament to render it harmless. The future course of political development must be left entirely in the hands of the Russian

people. Our aim is not to depose the local Soviets; in many places they are resigning themselves. We only deprive the local Soviet administration of its military power to render it helpless in placing obstacles in the movement of our trains. Its fate must be decided by the Russian people themselves. The PEC."¹⁴

Gajda was well aware of all political implications entailed in his disarming of the military forces of the City Soviet. He did not solicit assistance of the anti-Bolshevik units, none of them participated in his operation, and he did not depose the local Soviet. He merely disarmed it; that the Soviet dispersed was another matter. Such a course of action had been agreed upon at the last meeting of the Military Collegium on May 23 in Cheliabinsk, provided that any of the three Commanders considered negotiations fruitless. It seems that the meeting anticipated three situations to develop as the Czechs would disarm any local Bolsheviks. One, the Bolsheviks would be defeated in a direct clash and members of such a Soviet would either be captured or would flee. In this case a political interregnum would follow until some Russian group would assume the civil administration; the Czechs would exercise only military control. Second, a Soviet might be disarmed peacefully, then might stay in power for a while, but ultimately would be deposed by the population; the Czechs would not oppose such a development. Such a disarmed Soviet might also be deposed by the Czechs should it organize new hostilities against them. Also here the civil administration would not be assumed and political interregnum would follow until the Russians themselves came forward. Finally, hand in hand with the military operations of the Czechs the local elements would rise against the Soviet and depose it by force of arms, or peacefully. The Czechs would not oppose such a development.

What happened in Novonikolaievsk was one of the anticipated situations. It goes without saying that the Czechs sympathized with the anti-Bolsheviks at this stage, after the Bolsheviks and the Czech Communists succeeded in wearing out the last drop of their disinterested friendliness and neutrality, and favoured such a development to take place as soon as they disarmed the Bolsheviks, although not actively

assisting it. But the Czechs did not anticipate that in the moment the anti-Bolsheviks installed themselves in power attempts would be made to relegate them to a subordinate position and considered their troops as mere mercenaries in a crusade against the Bolsheviks. The *Bulletin* published by the new regime in Novonikolaievsk went even so far as to state that the Czech troops had merely participated in the anti-Bolshevik struggle in Novonikolaievsk, and that this political and military upheaval had been planned, organized and directed by the Military Command of the Siberian Government and executed by its own military forces. The Czechs had merely assisted.⁷⁷

Another distortion appeared in a publication of the Provisional Siberian Government at the beginning of June 1918:

“... The liberation of Siberia from the Bolsheviks takes place with active assistance of the Czechoslovaks. The Siberian Government offers to the Czech troops an opportunity either freely to depart from Russia and to continue on their way to France, or to take part in an anti-German struggle in the ranks of the New Russian Army... The Government will not permit the Czechs to interfere in internal life of the country. Fortunately, the Czechs themselves do not wish to do so. At present the Czech troops fight shoulder to shoulder with the military forces of the Provisional Government, being fully subordinated to the Command of the Western Siberian Military District and its Staff...”⁷⁸

It was painful for Gajda to read such distortions, and he several times protested. But his duties took him to the front lines, and soon the Czechs became identified with the liberation struggle spreading all over Siberia.

The reports that the Czechs were organizing a political upheaval electrified the Siberian population. In many places the people deposed without any difficulty the local Soviets upon a mere rumour that the Czechs were advancing upon the city. For instance, this happened in Chulym; when the Czechs arrived, the city already had a new regime. In other places the strong anti-Bolshevik groups, mentioned by Viegman, staged

uprisings against the Bolsheviks and deposed them directly, as it happened in Tomsk.⁷⁹ In Mariinsk Kadlec first seized the railway station and then disarmed the City Soviet, leaving it functioning. But the Bolsheviks began secretly to mobilize, and Kadlec deposed the Soviet on May 27. In Kansk Yeniseisky members of the local Soviet appealed to Captain Ushakov and begged him to set them in jail to spare them public wrath; the local people demanded lynching them. Ushakov set them in jail, but released them during the night under promise not to engage in any anti-Czech activities.⁸⁰

Soon entire Siberia was aflame. The Czechs first refrained from giving support to the anti-Bolshevik elements. But when Trotsky rejected their last bid for a peaceful settlement, presented to him by V. Neubert on May 29, the PEC ordered all its troops to give full support to all anti-Bolshevik elements and the Siberian Provisional Government. A memorandum to that effect was handed over by the PEC to Major Guinet on June 5, 1918. Now the conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks, developed into a real war. Although Gajda commanded only 3,830 men, the Bolsheviks lost the entire Siberia in a few weeks.

Ambush at Irkutsk

Trotsky's order of May 25 calling for disarmament of the Czechs and shooting of every one of them refusing to submit, greatly affected the Soviet of Central Siberia operating from Irkutsk. It will be recalled that this Soviet was no friend of the Czechs, and that since the time of the Penza Agreement, concluded at the end of March, it had stubbornly been opposing the entry of their trains into that region. As in Central Russia, the Soviets of Siberia were also in no position to disarm the Czechs and dissolve their units in a peaceful way, as envisaged by Aralov's cables of May 21 and 23. Trotsky's cable of May 25 introduced, however, an element of compulsion into the Czech-Bolshevik issue and the Irkutsk Bolsheviks realized that no further procrastination was possible.

The Military Revolutionary Staff of the Centro-Sibir dealt with the situation after receiving Trotsky's cable shortly after midnight on May 26 and decided to launch operations against

the Czechs. The position of the Siberian Soviets *vis-a-vis* the Czechs was much easier than that of the Soviets in Central Russia. First, there were only 3,800 Czech troops between Omsk and Irkutsk, a distance well over 1,100 miles. Second, except in Novonikolaievsk, their troops were not concentrated and could be dealt with as isolated trains. The plan of the Military Revolutionary Staff envisaged a two step operation. In the first place, the local Soviets must prevent the Czechs from resorting to the movement of their trains on their own; their trains must be kept dispersed. In the second stage the individual trains, one after one, would be admitted into Irkutsk and there forcibly disarmed and the units dissolved. In order to put into effect the first step a member of the Military Revolutionary Staff, Commissar Prokofiev, dispatched to all Military Commanders of the Siberian Soviets the following cable on May 26:

"... Undertake all preparatory work necessary for disarming the isolated Czech trains. Should your forces prove inadequate resort to any measures which would prevent the Czechs from renewing the movement of their trains: take away locomotives and, in extreme emergency, dismantle the railway line. Inform us about all steps you have undertaken in this respect. Further instructions will be given upon request . . ." ⁸¹

As soon as this cable was dispatched, the Military Revolutionary Staff of the Government of Central Siberia began to implement the second step of its plan. The Soviet of the Innokentievskaja station, about 5 miles west of Irkutsk, was requested to release towards Irkutsk one train of the First Division, of its Second Artillery Brigade. The Bolsheviks in Irkutsk then cleared the railway station of public and placed several machine guns into the windows of the main building in order to lay an ambush for the troops on their way to that city. ⁸²

It was in the afternoon of May 26 that the artillery train, about 600 men, steamed into Irkutsk station and was directed to stop right along the main building. The Bolshevik commissar who came to negotiate with the commander of the train seemed

a mild and kind man. He requested him to give up all arms and promised that as soon as the troops disarmed the train would be released out of the station, and that arrangements would be made for its further movement towards Vladivostok. The commander of the train said that he had given up arms at several places before reaching Irkutsk and that his train, instead of retaining 168 rifles, to which number it was entitled under the Penza Agreement, had disarmed down to 16 rifles. Surely, the Bolsheviks would not suspect his men of hostile intentions and would not demand the remaining 16 rifles. The Bolshevik commissar said nothing and disappeared into the station building. The commander relaxed thinking that he went to give an order to the railway administration to let his trains go ahead. But a great surprise was in store for him. Shortly after the commissar disappeared the Bolsheviks opened machine gun fire from the windows of the main building. Because with the 16 rifles in hand there was no chance for his men to return the fire, they all ran into the building and, before the assailants could clear out of the rooms, they caught them all at the machine guns and in a man to man fight made short work of them. The machine guns were seized and with their assistance the whole railway station occupied. The Czechs lost 15 men, and had 30 wounded. The Bolsheviks lost about 10 men; but the entire garrison of the railway station was captured, consisting mostly of the Internationalists.⁶³

After this rout of the Bolshevik forces at Irkutsk railway station the Czech commander realized that with the available forces it would be too risky to extend his operations into the city itself. Therefore, before departing, he sent a courier to the Batternaia station, about 7 miles west of Irkutsk, with instruction to two trains stationed there to advance upon Irkutsk and seize it. One train had infantry and was commanded by Captain Hoblik; the other train carried an aviation unit and its equipment and had been completely disarmed at Krasnoyarsk on May 22. As soon as the courier delivered the message Captain Hoblik seized the Batternaia station, armed the 1,000 men of both trains with weapons found there and began advancing upon Irkutsk. At about 6 P.M. on May 26 his two trains reached Innokentievskaya, disarmed the local Red Guards and seized

the station. Hoblik then decided to spend the night there and launch an assault upon Irkutsk in early hours of May 27.

The news about the fall of Innokentievskaja was brought to Irkutsk by the fleeing Red Guards early evening of May 26. The Revolutionary Staff realized that these two Czech trains must be prevented from entering Irkutsk and, not being able to send to that station an armed expedition over the railway, it began to organize and arm prisoners of war interned in a camp about a mile from Innokentievskaja. By midnight the preparations were finished and shortly thereafter the attack mounted. The Czechs were taken by surprise, but in the end the Bolsheviks suffered another defeat. After the victory rest of the night was spent in planning an assault upon Irkutsk, this to commence at 7 o'clock in the morning of May 27.

When the trains began to leave the station on that morning in order to mount the attack, suddenly a delegation of Bolsheviks, under a large white flag, appeared to offer a negotiated settlement. The delegation consisted of several members of the Government of Centro-Siberia, American Consul at Irkutsk Harris, and French Liaison Officer with the Army Corps, Commandant Verge. From Harris's account it appears that after the Bolsheviks had been routed at Innokentievskaja a member of the Siberian Government came to his residence in Irkutsk in early hours of May 27 and requested him to proceed with a delegation of the government to Innokentievskaja to negotiate a settlement with the Czechs. Harris agreed, called upon Verge, and under the flag of truce accompanied the delegation of the Siberian Government to that station.

Arriving at the scene of the encounter, Harris and Verge convinced Captain Hoblik to give up the plan of attack upon Irkutsk by promising to investigate the incident of the previous night. They said that the Bolsheviks wished to negotiate, and that an agreement permitting the Czechs to pass through Irkutsk could be arrived at. Hoblik charged that the Irkutsk Bolsheviks had been prompted into hostilities against the Czechs by Hungarian and German prisoners of war, and pointed out that the attacking force, which he had routed the previous night, consisted 75 per cent of Internationalists. The Czechs captured 22 Hungarians, 4 Germans and 9 Russians. In addition, they killed 5 members of the attacking force. They all

were foreign nationals; the rest of the Internationalists, however, escaped and was hiding in a near-by camp. Harris and Verge then insisted upon a visit to that camp, which the Bolshevik Commissars granted. Arriving in the camp the Allied representatives established that the prisoners of war had been involved in the night attack upon the Czechs, and then took with them one Austrian officer in order to assist in establishing the nationality of captured and killed Bolsheviks. The captured men were identified as Hoblik had stated; the killed were disinterred and identified by the officer as 4 Hungarians and 1 German. All Internationalists captured and killed, except of 2 or 3, were in uniforms of their former Wehrmacht.⁸⁴

Captain Hoblik thus proved his case and insisted upon his right to begin armed operations against Irkutsk. But Commandant Verge and Consul Harris insisted that his plan of attack be given up and the whole matter settled peacefully. Hoblik first refused to submit but, at the end of a long argument, signed a truce with the Government of the Centro-Sibir. The Bolsheviks agreed to let the Czechs to pass through Irkutsk unmolested, each train to be accompanied by one Bolshevik commissar, while the Czechs agreed to disarm down to 30 rifles per train.⁸⁵ During May 27 the Czechs disarmed, and their trains began to move eastward at 2 P.M. the next day.

The truce with the Bolsheviks, which was imposed upon the Czechs by Verge, proved to be a very costly mistake, similar to that committed by the Czechs under the influence of Guinet in Omsk. As soon as the trains left Irkutsk the Military Revolutionary Staff of the Centro-Sibir launched a new mobilization drive among prisoners of war in order to build Irkutsk into a fortress which could check the advance of the trains towards the east. Reporting to the Department of State on June 3 upon his role in the truce negotiations, Consul Harris stated that now it was beyond a shadow of doubt that "a large number of prisoners of war in Irkutsk are armed. From the best authority available I have it that there are now 600 prisoners armed in this city and that they compose a large part of the Red Guards."⁸⁶

: The main vehicle of the Bolshevik mobilization drive among prisoners of war was a German language newspaper *Die Weltrevolution*, published under the auspices of the Irkutsk Soviet.⁸⁷

Articles published in that paper charged the Czechs for attacking the Soviet Government, and called upon the prisoners to arms either to defend the Bolshevik power, or merely to fight the Czechs in their own interest to free the railway line so that they could be repatriated soon. The campaign was highly successful. Consul Harris reported to the Department of State on June 15 that "Irkutsk today is in the hands of 3,000 armed Austrian and German prisoners of war, commanded by prisoner officers. No Czech trains present in Irkutsk."⁸⁸ And again on June 20 he cabled to Washington that:

"... these armed prisoners of war form strongest element in the Red Guard amounting to fully 60%. Armed prisoners of war are in charge of all responsible posts in Irkutsk and of all military motor cars, and all machine guns are under command of armed prisoners of war. Soviet power in Irkutsk sustained only by armed prisoners of war . . ."⁸⁹

The pressure of Verge upon Hoblik to conclude a truce with the Irkutsk Bolsheviks on May 26 had to be paid for dearly. When the Czechs finally mounted their offensive against Irkutsk at the end of June they hit upon a wall of fierce resistance effectively organized along professional lines, an experience which sharply contrasted with the Bolshevik amateurish military efforts elsewhere. In Siberia the German officers themselves took into their own hands the matter of organizing their compatriots into military formations to fight the Czechs, but no Red Guards nor Battalions of Internationalists emerged from their efforts. It was a German army commanded by German officers and fighting its own war, which the Czechs met in this whole region around Lake Baikal. It was an entirely different front from that around Penza and Cheliabinsk although in those two places the percentage of foreign nationals in the Red forces was also high. It is not without significance that the Allied military and diplomatic dispatches reporting upon the fighting around Lake Baikal referred to a German front; the Bolsheviks were hardly in the picture.⁹⁰

The armed prisoners of war dominated the scene in Irkutsk and at Lake Baikal to such an extent that they decided to defend that region even if the Bolsheviks gave up the fight.

There was much at stake for them. Harris reported from Irkutsk, what appears on June 26, that:

"... Large numbers of armed prisoners have arrived from Chita and Semenov front, some remaining in Irkutsk, and others proceeding westward to oppose the Czechs . . . At a secret meeting of Internationalists, held on June 18th, it was decided to hold present Bolshevik Government in power even if it wished to resign. In a recent conversation with Geyzman, Commissar of Foreign Affairs, he informed me that three ways were being considered to disarm the Czechs. First was to blow up the (omission) tunnels; second, to recall all troops now engaged against Semenov; and third, to arm every available prisoner in Siberia. When the killed Red Guard men were buried on June 18th, 2,000 armed prisoners marched in parade . . ."⁹¹

Those prisoners of war, who for some reason refused to take up arms against the Czechs, were forced to work for the Bolsheviks. Harris reported that German war prisoners were compelled at point of bayonet to assist the Red Army dig trenches 8 versts west of the city.⁹²

The experience of the Czechs in meeting a German front at Lake Baikal during the period from June to August 1918 fully vindicated Drysdale's observations regarding the prisoners of war and his conclusions about the possible menace these posed for Allied interests in Russia. As will be remembered, this had been reported by him to Washington during March and April. Unfortunately, his judgment was overruled by Reinsch's comments in forwarding Drysdale's reports from Peking to Washington. Washington was further confused by Webster-Hicks reports on the subject. The upshot was that President Wilson refused to act upon Drysdale's reports, though the Secretary of State pleaded with him to act upon the assumption that the reports were correct. Thus the issue of prisoners of war, which was comfortably shelved in Washington in March-April, descended upon it with full force during June. But it was too late for President Wilson to retreat because other factors then complicated the situation.

The number and military capabilities of foreign nationals

defending Irkutsk and the whole Baikal Lake region is best seen from the fact that the ablest of Czech Commanders, Captain Gajda and his assistants Captain Kadlec and Colonel Ushakov, could not capture Irkutsk until July 11. It took full six weeks of brilliantly executed campaigns to capture Lake Baikal and join hands with the Vladivostok group at Oloviennaia station on August 31. It was impossible to break through enemy concentration by a direct onslaught. First, because of his numbers; and then because all tunnels in the region, about 40, were undermined. If pressed by the Czechs in a frontal attack the enemy would blow them up; it would take two years to repair them. Thus the Czech command had to resort to a difficult operation of attacking in deep rear. The frontal attack had to be suspended and the troops, dressed as Russian peasants, had to be deployed deep in the rear. This was a time consuming operation, but it fully succeeded in capturing all tunnels intact. Only Tunnel No. 39 was blown up as the last resort by German technicians on July 20. But the fleeing defenders were in a hurry and had no time to detonate all charges; the tunnel was damaged slightly and was repaired in a day.

Cheliabinsk: Peace at What Price?

While both the Bolsheviks and the Czechs resorted to arms on May 25 and the struggle which erupted at Marianovka, Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk, was gradually engulfing larger and larger portions of Siberian territory, peace was preserved in Cheliabinsk, the centre of Czech mutiny. Here the Czechs and the Bolsheviks co-operated. It will be recalled that the misunderstanding created by the occupation of that city by the Czechs on May 17, undertaken to secure the release of the 10 unjustly imprisoned troops, had amicably been settled. On May 22 the Military Commissar of the Soviet, Commandant Sadlucky, appeared with a Bolshevik delegation at the congress in order to ascertain the objectives of the Czechs and seek a settlement. Being assured there that their only aim was to get out of Russia, he even cabled to Trotsky a proposal in the evening of the same day suggesting how the Czech issue could be solved. He then concluded with them an agreement concerning further movement of their trains to and from Cheliabinsk,

and on May 23 first two trains left the city for Omsk. More trains were received and released on the following days. It will further be recalled that on May 25 two telegraphic conversations took place between Omsk and Cheliabinsk, and that the Cheliabinsk Bolsheviks stood up well to the pressure put upon them by the Military Commissar of Omsk Soviet, the militant and uncompromising Furtsov, and the Soviet's Secretary Karlov.

The Omsk Bolsheviks continued their utmost efforts to make the Cheliabinsk Soviet to rescind its transportation agreement with the Czechs to stop their movement towards Omsk even by dismantling the railway line. Moscow was angry at the Cheliabinsk Bolsheviks for their yielding to the Czechs. During the evening of May 25 the Chairman of the Cheliabinsk Soviet, Commissar Kobelianko, called Moscow and urged the Central Government to let the Czechs proceed to Vladivostok lest they themselves begin, in a militant manner, to free their way. The details are not known, but Moscow put off Kobelianko by saying that the whole matter would be once again reviewed and decided on May 26, and that Kobelianko would be informed at 12 o'clock noon on that day.⁹³

But Moscow did not call the whole day. Many things happened in the afternoon and evening of May 25. The Bolsheviks had been routed at Marianovka, and the Czechs had seized Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk. Omsk thus found itself cut off from Cheliabinsk in the east by the Sixth Regiment under Hanus controlling Marianovka and Izil-Kul, and in the east by the Seventh Regiment under Gajda controlling Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk. During the night from May 25 to 26 the Bolshevik strategists in Moscow must have realized that the entire military situation had rapidly deteriorated for the Bolsheviks, and that with the fall of Marianovka and Mariinsk the Omsk Soviet would have to fight on two fronts.

The details of communications exchanged between Omsk and Moscow on May 26 are not known. But from a telegraphic conversation of Kobelianko with Omsk Soviet in the evening of that day it appears that Omsk was put in charge of organizing the entire anti-Czech front. Kobelianko tried to argue with Omsk that it was futile, and extremely dangerous to attempt to stop the movement of their trains. *If the Czechs were not assisted by the local Bolsheviks in their movement then it was certain*

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While both the Bolsheviks and the Czechs resorted to arms on May 25 and the struggle which erupted at Marianovka, Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk, was gradually engulfing larger and larger portions of Siberian territory, peace was preserved in Cheliabinsk, the centre of Czech mutiny. Here the Czechs and the Bolsheviks co-operated. It will be recalled that the misunderstanding created by the occupation of that city by the Czechs on May 17, undertaken to secure the release of the 10 unjustly imprisoned troops, had amicably been settled. On May 22 the Military Commissar of the Soviet, Commandant Sadlucky, appeared with a Bolshevik delegation at the congress in order to ascertain the objectives of the Czechs and seek a settlement. Being assured there that their only aim was to get out of Russia, he even cabled to Trotsky a proposal in the evening of the same day suggesting how the Czech issue could be solved. He then concluded with them an agreement concerning further movement of their trains to and from Cheliabinsk,

and on May 23 first two trains left the city for Omsk. More trains were received and released on the following days. It will further be recalled that on May 25 two telegraphic conversations took place between Omsk and Cheliabinsk, and that the Cheliabinsk Bolsheviks stood up well to the pressure put upon them by the Military Commissar of Omsk Soviet, the militant and uncompromising Furtsov, and the Soviet's Secretary Karlov.

The Omsk Bolsheviks continued their utmost efforts to make the Cheliabinsk Soviet to rescind its transportation agreement with the Czechs to stop their movement towards Omsk even by dismantling the railway line. Moscow was angry at the Cheliabinsk Bolsheviks for their yielding to the Czechs. During the evening of May 25 the Chairman of the Cheliabinsk Soviet, Commissar Kobelianko, called Moscow and urged the Central Government to let the Czechs proceed to Vladivostok lest they themselves begin, in a militant manner, to free their way. The details are not known, but Moscow put off Kobelianko by saying that the whole matter would be once again reviewed and decided on May 26, and that Kobelianko would be informed at 12 o'clock noon on that day.⁹¹

But Moscow did not call the whole day. Many things happened in the afternoon and evening of May 25. The Bolsheviks had been routed at Marianovka, and the Czechs had seized Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk. Omsk thus found itself cut off from Cheliabinsk in the east by the Sixth Regiment under Hanus controlling Marianovka and Izil-Kul, and in the east by the Seventh Regiment under Gajda controlling Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk. During the night from May 25 to 26 the Bolshevik strategists in Moscow must have realized that the entire military situation had rapidly deteriorated for the Bolsheviks, and that with the fall of Marianovka and Mariinsk the Omsk Soviet would have to fight on two fronts.

The details of communications exchanged between Omsk and Moscow on May 26 are not known. But from a telegraphic conversation of Kobelianko with Omsk Soviet in the evening of that day it appears that Omsk was put in charge of organizing the entire anti-Czech front. Kobelianko tried to argue with Omsk that it was futile, and extremely dangerous to attempt to stop the movement of their trains. If the Czechs were not assisted by the local Bolsheviks in their movement then it was certain

sympathized with the Czechs and enthusiastically worked for them.

In order to protect the workers against Bolshevik threats the trade unions hit back. The trade unions approached the Czech Command with resolutions condemning agitation in labour ranks, requesting the Czechs to declare that their transportation orders must be executed unconditionally, and that anyone refusing to do so, or striking against the Czechs, would be shot. The Command issued such a declaration, and this then settled the tussle on the labour front.¹⁰⁴

Far more injurious proved clandestine mobilization efforts of the Cheliabinsk Soviet. Its agents secretly organized a workers militia in factories, and parties of agitators were dispatched to the near-by towns and villages to organize raids upon Czech positions. In a number of places the railway line was dismantled, and instances of sabotage became daily occurrences. On May 29 the Czech troops arrested in one village the Chairman of Cheliabinsk Gubernial Soviet, Commissar Vasenko, who in disguise of a flour mill worker was organizing and then leading raiding parties upon Czech positions and sabotaging the railway line.

The situation in Cheliabinsk, due to the subversive work of the Soviet, became untenable soon. Also intelligence reports indicated that the Bolshevik forces began to converge upon Cheliabinsk along the railway lines from the north *via* Yekaterinburg, the west *via* Ufa, and the south *via* Troitsk. In fact, a number of small engagements had already been fought all around the city. The continuous subversive activity of Cheliabinsk Soviet and its co-operation with the Bolsheviks from outside in harassing the Czechs prompted the PEC and the Command to disarm the Red Army unit guarding the building of the Soviet during the night from May 31 to June 1, imprison all members of the Soviet who could be reached and declare the Soviet divested of all authority. The Czechs assumed military control over the city. The uneasy peace came to the end.

Fall of Soviet Power in Siberia

By the time the Command decided to depose the Cheliabinsk Soviet its trains rolled towards a series of encounters with the

Bolsheviks in all directions: in the west in the Volga basin, in the east around Irkutsk, in the north around Yekaterinburg, and in the south around Saratov and Orenburg. The conflict fanned out in all directions from the Trans-Siberian line. The strategic problems the Czechs faced were enormous. A glance at the map shows the following deployment of their forces. On the western flank, based upon Samara, operated a group of 8,000 men under command of Lieutenant Cecek. Further east, about 900 miles, operated a group of Colonel Vojtechovsky of 8,800 men; this was based upon Cheliabinsk. Further to the east, about 1,100 miles, Captain Gajda operated with his 2,780 troops; this group was based upon Novonikolaievsk. Further to the east, about 500 miles, operated Colonel Ushakov with his 1,050 men; he was based upon Kansk Yeniseiskii. Further to the east, 1,500 miles as the crow flies, operated the Vladivostok group of 13,500 men. There was a span of 5,000 miles separating the troops in the Volga basin from those in Vladivostok.

The fighting was fearsome, the odds awesome. The Bolshevik forces in the Volga basin drew upon the resources of the entire European Russia, and Trotsky personally directed the campaign in this region; about 40 per cent of his force was composed of nationals of the Central Powers. He was also directly assisted by Berlin with technicians and specialists. The Bolsheviks fighting the Cheliabinsk group drew upon the manpower from forces which had originally been assembled against General Dutov in the triangle Yekaterinburg-Troitsk-Verchnie Udinsk, and upon prisoners of war who had been concentrated in the region Yekaterinburg-Perm-Viatka, prior to their repatriation to Germany and Austria. Here the percentage of foreign nationals in the Red forces came close to 60 per cent. Further east, around Irkutsk and Lake Baikal, Gajda and Ushakov fought an enemy whose units were composed up to 90 per cent of nationals of the Central Powers; some battalions and companies were purely German or Hungarian in their composition. Also the Vladivostok group fought against the Red forces composed in their majority of prisoners of war.

In spite of these heavy odds the Czechs went from victory to victory. Novonikolaievsk was captured on May 26, Penza May 29, Cheliabinsk May 31, Samara June 8, Omsk June 7, Yekaterinburg June 25, Vladivostok June 29, Irkutsk July 11,

and the whole region around Lake Baikal was seized between August 14 and 20.

The most taxing task had the Cheliabinsk group, which had to function as a bridge linking the operations of the Samara group on the western flank with those of the Novonikolaievsk group in the east. A contact with this latter group, under Captain Gajda, was established at the Tatarskaia station on June 9 (Map II), and with the Samara group, under Lieutenant Cecek, at the Miniary station a month later, on July 6 (Map III). Gajda then was able to establish contact with the Vladivostok group at the Oloviennaia station on the Manchurian border on August 31 (Map IV). On this date the entire Trans-Siberian line from its European terminal on River Volga, through the East Chinese Railway up to its Far Eastern terminal in Vladivostok, was in the hands of the Czechs, and a front was established on the western bank of the Volga River (Map V).

The military victories of the Czechs had two far-reaching, but much misunderstood and misinterpreted, consequences.

One, they were connected with the flare-up of civil war in Russia, a conflict during which the Bolsheviks were locked in a mortal combat until summer of 1920 with the new Russia rising on the ruins of Bolshevik rule in Russia and Siberia. It was a remarkable phenomenon that within a few weeks after the flare-up of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict the Soviet power was deposed in entire Siberia and on large territories of European Russia, particularly in the Volga basin. The reason for such a development was the fact that the beginning of the Czech military operations against the Bolsheviks closely coincided with an outbreak of a long prepared anti-Bolshevik uprising in all Siberia, organized by Russian underground groups. This then, coupled with Czech victories, reduced to ashes the Soviet power on vast expanses of land stretching from Vladivostok over the Ural Mountains and beyond up to Volga River (Maps VI).

At the end of June a provisional government of this entire region, the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia, came into existence in Omsk. And in September an All-Russian Provisional Government was set up in Ufa. The Czechs then began to function as an armed shield protecting the new governments in their efforts at organizing a new state life on

the liberated territories and a new Russian Army, which could take field against the Central Powers. The governments renounced the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, revived the treaty alliances with the Allies, and were ready to declare war against the Central Powers and to reopen the Eastern Front. Thus a New Russia was in the making, deriving its constitutional authority from the Constituent Assembly which had been elected in December 1917 in the only free general election ever held in Russia. Hereby a bond was established with the liberal democratic revolution which had deposed Tsarism in March 1917, and which was interrupted by a short spell of Bolshevik Terror.

The Russia was being reborn; the sick ally was rapidly recovering.

Second, the military victories of the Czechs prompted the European Allies into agreeing upon a project of sending an Allied expedition into Russia to reopen the Eastern Front in that country. It was agreed that the military and political efforts of the New Russia should be supported by sending a large number of Allied troops into that country, and that these troops, together with the troops of the New Russia and of the Czechs, could renew hostilities against the Central Powers. The hardest task of such an undertaking, the control of lines of communications, was already accomplished by the Czechs. They had in their hands the entire Trans-Siberian railway from the port of Vladivostok into the heart of Russia, to the proximity of the armed forces of the Central Powers. Also the organization of the new Russian army was well in progress, and there was no bar for the Allied forces to enter Siberia as the provisional governments invited them and were eager to co-operate in this Allied project. Once the invitation was extended there was no more the problem of whether such an Allied action would be an intervention in domestic affairs of Russia or not. It was precisely this problem which had immobilized the hands of the Allies until then, and which prevented them from deciding upon sending their expedition into Russia because these governments waited in vain for months for such an invitation to come from the Bolsheviks. Now the invitation was here, and from Russian governments which claimed for

Russia her place in the Allied councils as an ally and partner in the war against the Central Powers. This was a big change.

Why this change and new opportunities were not seized upon is, however, another problem, explored in the next volume of our study.

7

Soviet Interpretations

THIS WAS the story of the origins of armed confrontation between the Soviet Government and the Czechoslovak Legion. An important question is whether the struggle could have been avoided. While the evidence cited here shows that the confrontation resulted from a deliberate decision of Soviet authorities to retain the First Army Corps in Russia arrived at early in May, in which decision the Czechoslovak Communists played a decisive role, and which renegaded upon the Penza Agreement permitting the troops out of the country, the study makes it equally clear that the bloodshed could have been avoided. But only in middle of April, and if the political and military leaderships of the troops refused to tread the path of appeasement and instead forced upon the Soviet Government and the local Soviets the terms of that agreement as demanded by the Kirsanov Resolution. We have seen that the government had no effective military forces to resist even a forcible renewal of the movement at that time, and in view of this the troops would have reached Vladivostok in the middle of May as originally planned.

In May, however, the armed confrontation became unavoidable because the entire balance of advantages between the Czech troops and the Bolsheviks shifted in favour of the latter. Trotsky's success in arresting the movement of their trains at the end of April, first upon request of Berlin and then the

Allies, coupled with the improved military position mainly due to the influx of the Internationalists into the Red force, had created a situation which favoured a forcible retention of the entire Army Corps in Russia after the dismal failure of the Czech Communists to win over its proletarian element first through agitation and then ballot box at the pre-congress conference held in Penza at the end of April.

Because the evidence cited in our study—telegrams and orders of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Aralov and of Soviet leaders in Penza, Samara, Cheliabinsk, Omsk and Irkutsk—shows that the armed confrontation and the terrible civil war which followed was of their own doing, it is of interest to know how its origin was explained and interpreted by Soviet historians.¹

The interpretations of the origins of the confrontation put forth by Soviet writers are grossly at variance with all facts well established precisely by the documents issued by the Soviet Government during the Czech-Bolshevik crisis in March-May 1918. These interpretations follow a pattern familiar to all students of Soviet Affairs; that Soviet historians take mere political pronouncements of their leaders as facts, without inquiring into their substance, accuracy and documentary support. These pronouncements are further embellished by conjectures and elaborated into if not completely falsified then badly distorted pictures of historical events.

At the root of all interpretations of the origins of the conflict by historians of the Soviet Union lay such doctored evidence against the Czechs. The foundation for this evidence can be traced to the statements of Lenin and Trotsky, made at a Joint Meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party with the Soviet of City of Moscow held in Moscow on July 29, 1918.

First Lenin pronounced his thesis. Addressing this meeting Lenin stated that the Soviet Government had underestimated the newspaper reports regarding the part which French and British imperialism and capitalism played in the instigation of the Czech uprising. Lenin further said that the events amply proved that the uprising was an integral part of a plan, prepared long in advance, of the French and British which aimed to suppress the Soviet Government. As central evidence for his assertion Lenin drew the attention of the audience to an

article published in the official organ of the Czechoslovak Communists in Russia, *Prukopnik svobody*, on June 27, 1918. The article said that the leaders of the National Council had received from the French and the British representatives¹ about 15 million rubles from March 17 until the end of May 1918; this money financed the uprising of the Czechs, who thus were in paid service of the imperialists.²

Then Trotsky came with his thesis. Trotsky said that the documents captured in the Headquarters of the Czechoslovak National Council in Moscow on May 11, 1918, together with further evidence obtained from arrested White Guards, showed that there was a well prepared plan of the French Government to use the Army Corps as a centre for rallying all anti-Bolshevik forces in the country. The plan was worked out well in advance. It was launched at the Cheliabinsk congress, where a signal was given for a general uprising against the Soviet Government upon instructions of French military representatives. Trotsky based his case against the Czechs upon a cable which had been sent from Cheliabinsk to the French Mission in Vologda, and which allegedly described all preparations undertaken to mount the uprising. Trotsky admitted, however, that he was not sure whether the telegram had been intercepted by the Bolshevik telegraphists on May 22 or 25. From the cable he concluded that "in this way the Czechoslovak uprising was an instrument in the Anglo-French counter-revolutionary plan" aiming to suppress the Soviet Government.³

With these two "revealed truths" outlining the story of the origin of the struggle, the task of the historians of the Soviet Union became simplified. They developed particularly Lenin's thesis into a whole series of most fantastic tales, which appeared in official accounts of the civil war, history text books and articles.⁴

Thus compilations of well known facts, their misinterpretation, coupled with outright fabrication of new "evidence", are at the root of all Soviet works on the topic. The testimonies of the Czech Communists in Russia served as the primary source for Lenin. These testimonies, and the documents of the National Council seized in Moscow on May 11, were collected and published in a book entitled *Cechoslovaci*

*ve valce a v revolucnim Rusku; Sbirka oficialnich dokumentu o hnuti imperialistickem a komunistickem mezi Cechy a Slovaky v Rusku.*⁵

Also Trotsky's thesis received universal acceptance in works of Soviet historians of the period; but after his fall from power the argument was avoided and never drawn upon. It was through a British newspaperman, Philips M. Price, that Trotsky's thesis crept into studies of some Western scholars. Price published a summary of the documents referred to by Trotsky in the *London Daily Herald* on January 7, 1920. Price himself, however, never saw them with his own eyes.⁶

Another version of the origin of the conflict was advanced by Bohumil Smeral, when he testified during the Moscow trial against the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1922. Assisting the Soviet Government to liquidate a once powerful political group and an ally, Smeral testified that it were the Socialist Revolutionaries who had manoeuvred the Army Corps into the anti-Bolshevik uprising.⁷

A new aspect was introduced into the argument of Soviet historians against the Czechs by P.S. Parfenov.⁸ Parfenov maintains that their uprising was not only a joint Anglo-French undertaking, but was closely co-ordinated with the uprising of the anti-Bolshevik groups in Siberia. In making his case, Parfenov mentions two conferences where the collusion of the three parties to the conspiracy—the Allies, the Czechs and the Russian anti-Bolsheviks—took place. One conference allegedly took place in Moscow on April 14; the other in Novonikolaievsk on May 3. Regarding the Moscow conference, Parfenov alleges that it was held at the French Mission and was attended by Lockhart, General Lavergne, Colonel Corbeille, Colonel Syromiatnikov, General Innostrantsev, and a member of the Secret Russian Counter-Revolutionary Staff, Captain Konshin. The conference worked out a detailed plan of military action of the Czechs, and co-ordinated it with the plans for an uprising of the anti-Bolshevik groups in Siberia. The objective of this twin operation was the seizure of the Trans-Siberian line. The Allies would finance the whole enterprise; as a reward, the Czechs were promised diplomatic and political support in their struggle for national independence by the Allied Governments.

Following the Moscow meeting, Captain Konshin is said to have returned to Novonikolaievsk where the second conference was held on May 3. The meeting was allegedly attended by Russians and Czechs; the Russian participants came from all corners of Siberia. This meeting agreed upon a detailed plan of co-operation. A secret code was prepared to enable the conspirators to communicate with each other; arrangements were made with the Co-operatives Societies whereby funds could be transferred to local resistance groups. The Socialist Revolutionaries were the backbone of these resistance groups.⁹ The upshot of the conference was Gajda's Order No 38/1 of May 3, under which the attack was mounted later.¹⁰ It is unfortunate that Parfenov does not offer a single piece of evidence in support of his story.

The most complete case against the Czechs was made by Russian historian F.G. Popov, in 1932, in his pamphlet entitled *Chekho-Slovatskii miatezh i samarskaia uchredilka*.¹¹ All known facts, conjectures and fabrications are compiled and presented as a sinister conspiracy of "international imperialism with Russian reactionaries and the Czech troops in Russia."

According to Popov, the counter-revolutionary activities of the Czech troops began in March 1918, immediately after the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty. The groundwork for these activities was laid at a conference held in Jassy, Rumania, at the end of November 1917, where the French military and diplomatic representatives worked out the plan for an anti-Bolshevik uprising. The connecting link between the conspiracy prepared at this conference and the Czechs was a person named Cerensky, who attended on behalf of the Czech troops in Russia. After the conference a number of meetings took place between the Czechs and the Allied representatives in Kiev, because the political leadership of the former was stationed there. At the end of March both parties finally agreed upon all details, and concrete preparations were carried out for an anti-Bolshevik uprising.¹²

In another attempt to prove that the uprising of the Czechs was an integral part of the general Allied plan of attack upon the Bolsheviks, Popov repeats the thesis of Lenin regarding the funds received by the Czech leaders from the French and the British in Russia. Then the pamphlet of Smeral is quoted

to show that the uprising was a joint action of the Czechs and the Socialist Revolutionaries. In this connection Popov quotes Parfenov on the Moscow conference of April 14. The second conference, maintains Popov, was held in Cheliabinsk on May 14 and was attended by the Allies, the Czechs, the Socialist Revolutionaries and several members of Samara Constituent Assembly. The meeting prepared a plan whereby the Czech troops were to be deployed into strategically important places on the Trans-Siberian line; the attack would start on May 25. Popov further alleges that the seizure of Mariinsk on that day was a signal for the counter-revolutionary Russian groups to mount their general uprising against Bolshevik power in all Siberia.

Another new argument against the Czechs was brought forth by Popov's assertion that their troops were provoked into military operations against the Soviet Government by Russian officers who served in the Army Corps from its inception. Popov alleges that it was these Tsarist officers who, together with reactionary Czech commanders and political leaders, plunged the Army Corps into the uprising.¹³

Thus Popov's story presents the origin of the conflict as a collusion of the Allies with the Socialist Revolutionaries, reactionary Czech military and political leaders and Tsarist officers serving in the Army Corps. However, no documents are cited.

While in the earlier works of Soviet historians on the topic the French and the British Governments were portrayed as chief enemies of Soviet Russia, the "hate America" campaign mounted by the Soviet leadership after the Second World War called for new interpretations. In recent works of historians of the Soviet Union, and the Communist countries of East Central Europe, the emphasis is shifted from "Anglo-French" to "American imperialistic designs", as the chief cause of the origin of that armed confrontation.

For example, Russian historian A.I. Melkhin maintains that it was an American representative who gave the 15 million rubles to the Czech leaders at the Moscow meeting of the conspirators on April 18, 1918 to finance their uprising.¹⁴

And recent works published in Czechoslovakia present the Army Corps as an instrument of the American Government,

supported and financed to further its "imperialistic designs" in Russia and Siberia. The Army Corps had to capture the Trans-Siberian line for American monopolies and railway interest,¹³ and function as a vanguard of American intervention. This interventionist army was to be composed of American nationals of Slavic origin, to be called the Slavic Legion. The Congress, upon initiative of President Wilson, accordingly passed an appropriate mobilization decree.¹⁴

Works recently published in Prague on the topic follow the arguments developed by Soviet historians in early period, rehashing old facts and contentions. But the following new interpretations have been added to the charges making the Czechs responsible for the outbreak of the fighting.

First new contention is advanced by Muska. The author insists that the basis for the joint conspiracy of the Czechs with the Socialist Revolutionaries was laid in March 1918. This happened at a conference arranged in Moscow by V.V. Kostyn, a leading member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, and at that time Director of People's Co-operative Bank in Moscow. The conference was attended by nine Russians, representing the Siberian Co-operative Associations and the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, and F. Sip, Chairman of the Financial Department of the Army Corps. This conference agreed on a plan of economic and military co-operation between the Czechs and the Russian underground organizations. Following the conference the Czechs established special committees in every larger city all along the Trans-Siberian railway which maintained close contact with local organizations of the Socialist Revolutionaries. The rapid spread of the attack upon the Soviet power all over Siberia was due to that co-operation.¹⁷

Second new contention blaming the Czechs in Russia for the origin of the struggle with the Bolsheviks was a product of the campaign of the Prague regime to discredit two former Presidents of Czechoslovakia, T.G. Masaryk and E. Benes. Archives in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union have been searched for new evidence to show that both Presidents were not only enemies of the Soviet Union, "paid agents of international capitalism and Russian domestic reaction", but that they betrayed the national interests of the Czech and Slovak people as well.¹⁸

Most far-fetched falsifications of well established historical facts are made by J. Kral.¹⁹ The author attempts to show that Masaryk and Benes, and the Army Corps, had nothing to do with the attainment of independence and creation of Czechoslovakia after the First World War. According to Kral, it was the impetus of the Bolshevik Revolution and its impact upon the proletarian masses of the Czech lands and Slovakia, and the consequent collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which brought independence to the Czech and Slovak people. The independence was attained without Masaryk and Benes who, in fact, prevented its earlier arrival through their activities in the capitalist countries. Had they supported the Bolshevik revolution and its spread into the heart of Europe the Monarchy would have collapsed much sooner. Both leaders, however, co-operated with the imperialists who were interested in the prolongation of war, and thus betrayed the national interests. The only true patriots were the Czech Communists in Russia who supported the Soviet regime. Independence came from the East not the West.

The search in archives in Prague and the Soviet Union yielded not a single piece of documentary evidence to support these contentions of the Communist writers. The only "new" evidence invoked against Masaryk was material relating to his financial assistance to Boris Savinkov. But Masaryk's relations with Savinkov, and other exiled Russian leaders, are well known. Later also the Czechoslovak Government, officially, gave generous support to various Russian exiled individuals and organizations, and opened a special University in Prague to enable many exiled professors and students to continue their work.

The search in archives in Prague and Moscow, undertaken by Czech historians to produce new evidence against the Army Corps in Russia, is of truly great importance to this writer. They had done the job of searching, in archives inaccessible to him, for every bit of evidence relating to the origin of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict unfavourable to the Army Corps. Unfortunately, no new factual evidence was produced and published which he could use in his effort at an objective reconstruction of that event. And because it is doubtful that any such new evidence will be produced, their effort closes a period

in which every blame for the origin of that struggle was thrown at "the bourgeois Czech leaders, imperialistic plans of the Allies, and conspiracy of Russian domestic reactionaries".

In the sixties a trend towards a more liberal and objective treatment of this event was evident in Czechoslovakia. The trend started by Krizek in 1958 was intimately connected with the trend towards the rehabilitation of Masaryk and Benes. It was part of a larger process aiming to liberalize approaches to historical writing, and at the same time to free them from subservience to and imitation of Soviet theories and interpretations, which led eventually to Dubcek era.

One notable exception is a work of Kvasnicka, which accepts many contentions and fabrications produced about the event by Soviet historians. Although published in 1963, the great disregard of Kvasnicka for the well established historical facts ranks his study among worst of the Stalinist era.²⁰

Even Soviet historiography seemed on the retreat from dogmatic and propagandistic interpretations of the early period. For example, Klevanskii's interpretation of the origin of the conflict, in which he sees no Allied hand, is highly significant:

"The initiative for the uprising came from the so-called "military group", which consisted of bourgeois politicians and military leaders hostile to the Soviet Government, and co-operating closely with Russian reaction. *The uprising started at the moment when the Allies and the United States did not have a unified plan and enough of armed forces to carry out their long expressed interventionist intentions.*"²¹

Klevanskii thus demolishes the theory of the *Grand Conspiracy* against the Soviet Government. At the time of the outbreak of the conflict the Allies did not have a common plan of action for Russia, and even if they had one, the shortage of available troops would have prevented them from carrying it out. The only thing that the Allies had, but only Britain and France and not the United States, was the long-standing intention to intervene in Russia. Klevanskii thus comes pretty close to the interpretations of the Allied policies towards Russia in spring of 1918 generally accepted by scholarship in the West.

While Klevanskii absolves the Allied governments of responsibility for the origin of the conflict, this study has shown that it were not the Czechs but the Soviet Government and its leaders upon whom rests the blame for this tragic event and its terrible consequences which devastated Russia and Siberia for years to come. Although it appears that Soviet historians are taking a more dispassionate and objective look at the events of the spring of 1918, it is most unlikely that we shall see soon serious works casting Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Karakhan in their true historical roles. Trotsky's name is beginning to appear only now in works of Soviet writers, after decades of attempts to eradicate it and almost deny his historical existence. And concerning Lenin, it is inconceivable that in the foreseeable future he would be treated as a human being who shares responsibility for the error in judgment of his government in dealing with the Czechs in spring of 1918, and thus for the origin of a terrible and costly civil war which the government had brought upon itself. Were such an admission made, it would destroy the basis upon which rests the entire history of the "period of civil war and foreign intervention", as the period is officially called by Soviet historians.

The Czech political and military leadership is not, however, without blame. It is blamed by default, because had it pressed for the compliance with the terms of the Penza Agreement in early April, and in accord with the measures advocated by the Kirsanov Resolution, there is little doubt that the troops would have reached Vladivostok safely and that the struggle could have been avoided.

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During Dubcek era in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the whole question of the Czechoslovak Army Corps and the Bolsheviks was reopened in a public debate in press, calling for a new and objective assessment of these events after two decades of distortions and falsifications.²² Thousands of former Russian Legionnaires, as members of the Army Corps were known in the country, who survived twenty years of terrible persecution against them because of the stigma attached to them that they had been agents of western imperialism who attempted to destroy the first proletarian state in the world in 1918, were

released from jails and rehabilitated.

However, the discussion of these issues, which forced open the entire Russian Question in the country, i.e., the entire relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, was terminated by the invasion of the country by Soviet troops in August 1968, and driven underground where it is quite alive, to be resumed at the next historical opportunity.

Note : Throughout the entire work the short form "Czech" has been used as a substitute for the long form "Czechoslovak".

DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT NO. 1

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June 17 1918

*Paper on Intervention in Russia, Drawn up for the Chief
of the Imperial General Staff, by the British Section,
Supreme War Council, Versailles*

Problem "A"

A DETAILED MILITARY ARGUMENT WITH REGARD TO ALLIED INTERVENTION IN SIBERIA

(1) The disintegration of the Army of Russia, followed by her assumption of a neutral attitude, has in the course of the last year brought about a change in the military situation, of a nature gravely and dangerously disadvantageous to the Allied cause. Apart from the amount of military and national energy thereby freed for use elsewhere, the Central Powers have been enabled to transfer more than 70 divisions from the Eastern to the Western and Italian Fronts.

Russia's present position of neutrality is not likely to continue long, and unless the present trend of affairs is checked or diverted by military action, her domination and exploitation by Germany as a military asset of the Central Powers, appeared certain in the near future. The outlook from the Allied point of view is a disquieting one, for the potential resources of Russia in manpower and material, and their employment for military purposes, are likely to be determining factors which will weigh more and more heavily as the war continues.

Note: The document bears the following hand-written note of General Bliss: "This paper was given under the seal of *Confidence* and no public use should be made of it. Tasker H. Bliss." (Ed.)

These resources, if utilized and organized by Germany for the support and reinforcement of her military power, will go far to counter-balance the access of strength to the Allies which will be provided by the arrival of the American Armies.

(2) From the purely British point of view a Russian Empire, subject to German domination, constitutes a menace of the utmost gravity. A strong and capable military power, such as Germany, controlling resources of Russia, and utilizing them to exert increasing pressure through Persia and Afghanistan on India, might in no very distant future render our military and commercial position in Asia untenable, and would at any rate oblige us to divert and weaken our forces in the Western theatre of war to an extent incompatible with final victory. The Pan-German desire for Eastern domination still obtains, and has been increased and heightened by the collapse of Russia as a governing power.

(3) In order to avert such shaping of future events as that above indicated the following measures on our part are required:

(a) The prevention of further penetration by Germany into Russia.

(b) The reconstitution of an Eastern battlefront with the aid of the numerous Russian elements which are hostile to Germany.

(4) The organization of Russian resources is now being actively prosecuted by Germany (see Appendix "A" and Maps "A.1" and "A.2").

The provinces of Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and the Ukraine have already been in varying degrees brought under German control as vassal states, and her influence is now being rapidly extended to the Caucasus and towards Siberia. Supplies for military purposes and labour for military purposes are already being provided, and there are many indications that recruitment for military purposes has been begun and will, at no distant date, assume proportions of serious military importance. This process, unless checked, will lead to an access of military strength on the part of the Central Powers which will gather increasing weight as time goes on, and will

eventually prove a decisive factor in the issue of the war.

If Allied intervention be not undertaken, and the organization of Russian resources for military purposes by Germany should proceed unhampered, a situation will be produced in which Germany will be able to concentrate her Armies on the Western Frontiers, and keep them reinforced and nourished by drawing on the resources of a prostrate Russia. Intervention by the Allies will, to a large extent, deny to Germany the use of these resources, and oblige her to divert considerable forces to the Eastern theatre. Time is, however, of the essence of the case, and should Allied intervention be long deferred, there is little doubt but that German control of the Siberian railway will be firmly established and great difficulties presented to an Allied advance from Vladivostok.

(5) The presence of troops of more of the Allied Powers in Siberia would form a nucleus on which the law-abiding and anti-German forces of Russia could crystallize, and would permit the formation of a Russia Army capable of neutralizing a large amount of German military effort elsewhere.

The extent to which Russian co-operation and armed assistance would be forthcoming is a most important factor in the situation, and will be largely dependent on the composition of the Allied interventionist force, and on the circumstances attendant on its entry.

In the case of the Allied forces, in which Japan was not represented, there is a reason to suppose that the bulk of the Siberian Nation would be actively friendly, the only positive hostility to be expected would be that of German prisoners on the railway, combined with a small minority of the more extreme Bolshevik elements.

On the other hand, if Japan forms the chief constituent in the interventionist force, the friendly element will be less numerous and enthusiastic, the majority will probably be indifferent, and the opposition of the Bolshevik and anti-Entente elements will become a factor of considerable military importance.

(6) Circumstances appear to render the acceptance of Japanese co-operation unavoidable; we should, however, attempt at any rate at first to render the part played by Japan as little prominent as possible, and to give a European comple-

xion to the expedition. The first landing should be one in which Japan is not represented to a greater extent than any other Allied force. The Allied force should move forward along the railway, gathering and organizing adherents in its progress. The main Japanese forces should follow at a considerable distance, consolidating the communications. The distance to which the advance should be cannot be closely determined, until the situation has been actually tested. But should the Russian attitude towards intervention prove, as it may, to be cordial and even enthusiastic, it might well prove practicable to occupy the important junctions of Samara and Penza, from the former of which railway communications run to Turkestan, and from the latter to the Caucasus, to Moscow and Northern Russia (see Map "B").

(7) Operations should, if circumstances permit, be pushed well beyond Cheliabinsk, which should not be regarded in any sense as a final objective. With regard to such further operations, it is not possible to say more than that they will be generally guided by the object for forcing Germany to detach as largely as possible from the Western theatre. It is further clear that they closely follow the main lines of railway, and must be dependent on the extent to which Russian assistance materialized, and on the dispositions of the German forces at the time being.

It is easy to imagine circumstances which might admit of movement south-westward to control the Caucasian communications, west-wards towards Moscow, or north-westwards with a view to obtaining touch with the ports of Murmansk and Archangelsk. But speculation on a yet unborn situation of this nature is of little or no practical value.

(8) Organization of the lines of communication rearward service should be mainly under Japanese control, but in the organization and formation of the friendly Russian elements into armed forces, the leading part should be played by other Allied Powers. With this object in view as large number as possible of European Officers, with knowledge of Russia and of the Russian language, should accompany the European portion, or advanced guard, of the expedition.

In this connection i.e., the attraction and military organization of friendly Russian elements, attention must be drawn to

the important power afforded by the control of the large corn supplies and rich wheat growing districts of Western Siberia. All reports concur in foretelling severe famine in European Russia during the coming winter. The possession of almost the only large food preserve in Russia should provide the Allies with a powerful lever conciliating, attracting and utilizing large sections of the Russian population. The possession of these large local supplies will also greatly facilitate the supply of our Armies, and ease the strain on the carrying capacity of the railway communications.

(9) To summarize—Non-intervention involves:

The eventual control of Russia by Germany.

The acquirement of a resource of manpower and material which may go far to counter-balance the arrival of the American Army.

Increased pressure by Germany on the Western front.

A threat to British possessions and interests in the East, which may involve the weakening of British forces on the Western front.

Intervention will serve:

To bring against Germany a reserve of manpower which otherwise cannot be employed against her—the Japanese Army.

To bring against Germany a reserve of manpower and material which may otherwise be employed in her interest—the Russian population and resources.

To oblige Germany to detach to a distant theatre, in difficult circumstances, important forces which would otherwise be used on the Western Front.

To avert, or least mitigate, the Turko-German menace to India and British interests in the East.

Problem "B"

THE SIZE OF THE ALLIED ARMY WHICH WOULD BE MAINTAINED
AS FAR WESTWARD AS CHELIABINSK

(1) The distance by the Trans-Siberian railway from Vladivostok via Karunskaya to Cheliabinsk is 4,052 miles. It would

probably be also necessary to use the alternative railway route from Vladivostok to Karunskaya (the Amur—Ussuri railway) which is some 1,500 miles in length. This makes a total railway communication of about 5,500 miles, which it would be necessary to hold and maintain. To this must be added the water routes, which in Siberia constitute very important means of communication.

To support an army in the neighbourhood of Cheliabinsk (see Map "B") the ports of Vladivostok, Dalny, Fusan and Chemulpo would be available, all which are connected to the Trans-Siberian railway: Vladivostok directly, Dalny by the junction at Kharbin, and Fusan and Chemulpo via Kharbin and Mukden.

The capacity of these ports should easily allow the railway connected with them to be worked to their full capacity.

(In the Russo-Japanese war the Japanese had to start with only the Korean ports to launch their expeditionary forces and afterwards used Dalny also. They maintained a force of some 600,000 to 700,000 men, and therefore even allowing for modern conditions the port accommodation available for an Allied expedition should be equal to anything that could be sent.)

(2) The following lines are available to deal with the intake of the ports in question:

- (1) Vladivostok—Kharbin—Karunskaya double line.
Vladivostok—Khabarovka—Nerchinsk—Karunskaya single line, i.e. the Amur-Ussuri line.
- (2) Dalny-Kharbin single line.
- (3) Fusan-Seoul-Mukden single line.
- (4) Chemulpo-Seoul single line (joining the Fusan-Mukden line).

From Karunskaya onwards the line is doubled for the remainder of the journey. Karunskaya is therefore the bottleneck on which all traffic proceeding westwards would have to pass. It is, therefore, a question what this bottleneck can cope with.

The Russian attained a maximum of 12 troop and supply

trains each way daily, at the time of the Russo-Japanese War, each troop train carrying about 1,100 infantry-men, and the average goods train 485 tons gross, the net useful load being about 300 tons. It can be assumed that trains could be made up at least to this capacity (it could very likely now be improved upon), and that doubling of the line, which has since been affected, will allow of 60 trains each way daily (the product of the double line of this length over a single can be taken as 5 to 1). It will be seen that a very considerable force could be concentrated and maintained over this line.

These are three conditions, however, to be fulfilled.

- (1) A sufficiency of personnel to keep the permanent way in good condition and to work the line (see page 11 and Note).
- (2) A sufficiency of locomotives and rolling stock.
- (3) Adequate protection for the line.

(1) We may assume that a division under fighting conditions requires two trains a day, therefore 25 divisions could be maintained at and about Cheliabinsk.

Work out in other terms, also from the experience of this war, a division requires some 2,800 tons of stores, supplies, etc., a week.

Our railway can carry $60 \times 300 \times 7$ equals 126,000 tons a week, or the equivalent for 45 divisions. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to assume that a force equivalent in numerical strength to 30 divisions could be maintained on the Ural front, provided the necessary facilities for unloading, handling and distribution at rail-heads could be effected.

It must be further remembered that we are assuming in this instance:

- (1) That the troops are continuously under battle condition.
- (2) That nothing can be obtained locally.

The estimate, therefore, that troops equivalent to the personnel of 25 divisions, organized in Corps and Armies, but exclusive of line of communication troops, could be maintained

in Cheliabinsk district appears, from the railway point of view, to be a safe one.

Problem "C"

WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN AN ARMY
AT CHELIABINSK OF SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO PREVENT
SUPPLIES BEING WITHDRAWN FROM SIBERIA TO
GERMANY

(1) The rail exits westwards from Siberia proper are two in number, viz: a double line via Cheliabinsk—Ufa—Samara, and the single line via Tiumen—Ekaterinburg—Perm—Vologda (see Map "C").

These afford the only means of exporting material in bulk westwards from Siberia.

The question of preventing supplies from being withdrawn westwards resolves itself, therefore, into the question of holding these two railways, and for this purpose the Allied forces must be pushed at least sufficiently westwards to secure the lateral railway Kuvshinov—Ekaterinburg—Cheliabinsk.

(2) From paragraph (B) above it appears that a force equivalent to 25 divisions of Allied troops could be maintained, if necessary, on this line for the defence of the railway.

To drive back or defeat this force, it would be necessary for the Germans to attack it with a force of least 40 divisions.

Such an operation would involve for the Germans the previous occupation of all the Russian districts lying along the railway Petrograd—Vologda—Viatka—Perm—Ekaterinburg, and the railway Cheliabinsk—Samara—Moscow—Smolensk-, and the provision of L. of C. troops in sufficient numbers, not only to work the railways, but to overcome all hostile elements.

Further, a complete re-organization of these railways, which are reported to be in a very bad condition and short of rolling stock, would be necessary.

(3) It is apparent, therefore, that an attempt to dislodge the hold of the Allies, even if unassisted by auxiliary Russian armies, over the exits of Siberian trade would involve the military effort of so heavy a nature as to make it almost prohibitive, unless the active and unanimous co-operation of European Russia be assumed. Even in this improbable event, forces would have

to be diverted from the Western Front, which could ill be spared by Germany, and would facilitate the task of the Allies in that all-important theatre.

Problem "D"

THE NECESSARY FORCE OF ALLIED TROOPS WHICH WOULD BE
REQUIRED TO CARRY OUT ACTIVE OPERATIONS FROM
MURMANSK OR ARCHANGELSK EITHER WITH, OR
WITHOUT, INTERVENTION THROUGH SIBERIA

(1) With regard to the present situation, the importance of the Northern Ports, Murmansk, Petchenga and Archangelsk lies in the fact that they constitute the only direct means of communication between the Allied Powers and European Russia (see Map "D"), and would, if acquired by Germany, greatly assist her in the conduct of her submarine campaign, increase her popularity in Finland and strengthen her hold on the Government of Russia. The retention of these ports by the Allies is, therefore, apart from any question of intervention in Siberia, of great importance.

(2) The connection of operations in this theatre with those resultant on intervention in Siberia is at present remote, and the interaction of the two campaigns will be for a long time inconsiderable. In the future, however, supposing that intervention in Siberia is successfully conducted, and that a new line of battle is established in Russia, the utilization of the Northern Ports, as supply bases, will become of the greatest importance. The future value of these Ports is, therefore, a very high one.

(3) On the other hand, with regard to active operations on any considerable scale in this theatre, it must be borne in mind:

- (a) That the Allied force employed would have to be provided at the expense of our operations in the Western theatre and would not consist—as in the case of the Siberian expedition conducted mainly by Japanese troops—of additional forces not elsewhere employable. In other words, it would involve a partition and not an increase of our total fighting power.

- (b) In these desolated, foodless and sparsely inhabited regions there would be less chance of anti-German element in Russia rallying to our standard, and far greater difficulties in equipping and organizing them into fighting formations, and in getting them supplied when so formed. The greater proximity of the enemy and his possibilities of interference, as compared with Siberia, would render the organization of Russian forces a matter of great difficulty. A famine of great severity is impending in these regions and no supplies are obtainable locally as in Siberia.
- (c) The sea communications from Europe lie through a submarine infested area. Ice is a great difficulty in the approaches to Archangelsk. British shipping would have to be employed based on England, instead of Japanese shipping based on Japan as in the case of an expedition through Vladivostok.
- (d) It therefore appears that until the results of intervention through Vladivostok develop we should reduce our military effort in the North Russian theatre to the minimum necessary to deny the Northern Ports to the enemy. Our general attitude should be defensive, though that defence should be of as active a nature as possible.

(4) If this general policy of defensive action be adopted it remains to consider the forces required to carry it into effect (see Map).

- (a) With regard to Archangelsk:

Archangelsk, provided that we retain the command of the White sea, can only be seriously attacked by means of the railway line, 750 miles in length via Petrograd, Zvanka, Vologda, Archangelsk.

A small mobile column pushed forward from Archangelsk along the railway line should be able, by the employment of suitable delaying tactics, and by extensive railway demolition, to render a German advance extremely slow and difficult.

	6 battalions
	3 field batteries
An Allied Force of	3 mountain batteries
	3 heavy batteries
	4 armoured trains

With a corresponding proportion of railway troops, Engineers and auxiliary forces, should be sufficient for present purposes.

- (b) With regard to Port Murmansk and Petchenga:
The Murmansk railway from Port Murmansk to Svanka is 750 miles in length. The line was hastily laid, and is in bad condition. It may be divided from north and south into 4 main sectors, viz:
- (1) Port Murmansk to Kandalaksha
 - (2) Kandalaksha to Kem
 - (3) Kem to Petrozavodsk
 - (4) Petrozavodsk to Zvanka.

The main lines of advance open to an enemy are:

- (a) From Rovaniemi (railhead), by road against Petchenga (270 miles). It is considered that a force not exceeding a division with artillery could be moved this summer and supplied by this route.
- (b) From Rovaniemi railhead by road and light railway (under construction) 220 miles to Kandalaksha. It is estimated that a force not exceeding 1½ division could this summer be moved and supplied by this route.
- (c) From Sandavola railhead, 120 miles to Lodeinoie Pole and thence 80 miles by rail to Petrozavodsk. It is estimated that a force of 1 division could this summer be moved and supplied by this route.

It is to be borne in mind that these communications will be improved, and that a Finnish army is in course of organization under German supervision, which will place a force equivalent to 10 divisions at disposal for the operations under consideration. Of these, however, it is estimated that only three could be employed in the near future owing to indifferent state of lines of advance. These, moreover, would be widely separated,

and their co-ordination and supply would be matters of considerable difficulty.

(5) It is considered that a force of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 divisions, 4 armoured trains and with auxiliary services at Port Murmansk and Petchenga should, if skilfully handled, suffice for the protection of these ports and of the railway as far south as Kanda-Laksha. South of this point its successful protection is highly problematic. Kem, which is both a station on the railway, and a port on the White Sea, is a point of considerable importance, and its utilization as a submarine base by Germany would seriously affect our naval position in the White Sea and neighbouring waters. Special measures, of a nature to be determined according to local conditions by the General Officers Commanding, would be necessary to ensure its protection to the last possible moment. With regard to the Murmansk suitable point would deny, for a long time, its utilization by the enemy.

(6) To summarize: The following troops are considered necessary for the defence of the Northern Ports during the coming summer, winter and spring:

(a) For Archangelsk:

	6 battalions
	3 field batteries
An Allied Force of	3 mountain batteries
	3 mobile siege batteries
	4 armoured trains

(b) For Port Murmansk and Petchenga:

	$1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 divisions
	6 mobile siege batteries
	6 mount. batteries (in lieu of divisional art.)
	4 armoured trains

with a corresponding proportion of railway troops, Engineers and Auxiliary Services.

Problem "E"

WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSED OPERATIONS, THE DIFFERENCE IN THE NUMBER OF MEN AND THE AMOUNT OF MATERIAL AND SUPPLIES WHICH WOULD BE NECESSARY IF THE LOCAL INHABITANTS WERE (i) FRIENDLY, (ii) INDIFFERENT, (iii) HOSTILE, (iv) PARTLY HOSTILE AND PARTLY FRIENDLY

With regard to the attitude of the local inhabitants:

(1) In the Northern theatres (Archangelsk-Murmansk)

The population north of the line Petrograd-Vologda is a sparse one according to all reports, a serious famine in those districts is impending during the coming winter, food is already scarce and difficult to obtain. If we take advantage of this situation and supply in exchange for labour and assistance there should be no doubt our receiving the active co-operation of the local inhabitants. If they should prove hostile, a more improbable contingency, their lack of numbers and scarcity of food would render their hostility a matter of little importance.

(2) In the Siberian theatre

Here the 5,500 miles of railway with sidings, depots and base ports would in a friendly country require at least 200,000 men for protection work and maintenance. The size of the force which could be maintained would depend largely on the attitude of the inhabitants. The variation is estimated below:

	<i>No. of men</i>
(a) <i>Inhabitants friendly</i>	
No. of divisions to be maintained 25*	500,000
No. of Allied troops on L. of C.	100,000
Labour from inhabitants largely military.	100,000
(b) <i>Inhabitants indifferent or partly hostile and partly friendly</i>	
No. of divisions to be maintained 20*	400,000
No. of troops on L. of C.	200,000
Labour from inhabitants chiefly civil and paid for highly	100,000

*The total number of troops that can be supplied at Cheliabinsk and on the line of railway there to is estimated at 600,000.

(c) *Inhabitants hostile*

If the large majority of the inhabitants of Siberia (numbering over 9 million including probably 2 million men of military age) were hostile, it is doubtful whether an expedition as far as Cheliabinsk would be possible, as the safety of the communications would be too precarious.

APPENDIX "A"

*Manpower to be Derived by Germany from Occupied
Russian Province*

(1) As far as can be ascertained the population of Finland, the Baltic Provinces (including the district of Petrograd), Lithuania, Poland and the Ukraine is about 60 million. In France, with a population of 40 million, there were, at the outbreak of war, about 5,880,000 males between 19 and 40. A population of 60 million should therefore contain 8,880,000 males between these ages. Of this number 5,000,000 should be fit (category "A") men. There is, therefore, no doubt that the reserve of manpower available in the occupied Russian Provinces is enormous, and the following points must be considered before an estimate can be formed of the degree to which this reserve will be exploited by the Germans:

- (a) Admitting that the Provinces in question are under complete German control at what rate could men be collected and trained for military or civil employment?
- (b) What number of foreigners could be absorbed by Germany in military and civil organizations without endangering the moral of the army, or provoking extensive unrest among German civilian workers?

As regards (a), the following should be noted:

- (1) The area over which this population is spread is very large.
- (2) Communications are probably poor and are probably not worked efficiently.
- (3) The languages spoken vary and are foreign to the Germans.
- (4) No machinery probably exists for calling up men and no recent census is likely to be available.
- (5) A number of individuals will certainly try and avoid military service either from a natural disinclination for war, because they have already served in the Russian Army and know what war means, or because of an inbred aversion to placing themselves under German control in either a military or civil capacity.

It might be also noted that in the United States it took a year to muster and enrol, in the Army, half a million men, although the nation was wholeheartedly in favour of taking an early part in the war and difficulties in regard to language and communications were probably negligible.

(2) Taking all the above points into consideration it would appear unlikely that for the first six months (commencing in June 1918) the Germans would be able to enrol and place in military or civil occupations more than 25,000 men monthly (exclusive of number of men now being raised in Finland). After December the average rate of intake might conceivably rise to 50,000 a month or more.

(3) As regards (b), what number could the Germans employ?

The Enemy Personnel Committee reported in October 1917, that the distribution of the German male population of military age was approximately as follows:

(a) In the Army	6,263,000
(b) Not in the Army (probably containing a large proportion of men of low category):	

(1) Munition workers	1,000,000	
(2) Production of coal and iron	350,000	
(3) Railways	<u>500,000</u>	1,850,000

(c) In addition to the above: retained for ship-building, Post Office, Agriculture, Administration, Fishing, etc.	<u>1,150,000</u>
Total in Civil Life	3,000,000

Also at least 400,000 prisoners of war employed on various military and civil works.

(4) It is known that arrangements have been made in Finland to raise an Army of 1,000,000 men trained by German Command in the event of Russia again attacking Germany. Under present conditions it does not seem probable that Germany will be in position to form divisions, or even complete fighting battalions of men from the other Russian Provinces, so that probably, in order to increase the Army Reserve for 1919, the manpower obtained from these Russian occupied Provinces will be absorbed in non-combatant services of the Army and civil occupations to release more Germans for service in fighting units. The procedure of pushing German males into the front line by replacing them in civil life cannot, however, continue, indefinitely. The German losses since the beginning of the war have been severe and the time must come when the manpower situation has reached such a state that to continue to maintain the present number (242) of divisions with German personnel will be prejudicial to the recuperative power of the nation after the war. The dilution of civil labour in Germany also requires consideration; the vague rumour that foreign labour was to be introduced in munition factories in England has before now nearly produced a strike, and the recent strike in France was largely due to the apprehension that American labour was to be imported. Allowing that the discipline of the working class in Germany is probably greater than in other countries it is possible that the introduction of large masses of foreign labour would produce considerable unrest.

(5) Taking the total of Government civil workers as 3 million, and assuming that a proportion of 10% foreigners could be introduced without danger, 300,000 might be imported from Russia. It is, therefore, suggested that working on the lines indicated above the manpower obtained by Germany from the Russian Provinces would be absorbed or employed as follows:

<i>How manpower is employed</i>	<i>Rate of intake per month</i>	<i>Total by 1st March 1919</i>
(a) German-Finnish Army	Now being enrolled	100,000
(b) Substitution in non-combatant branches of the Army	15,000 June to December, 10,000 January and February 1919	125,000
(c) Civil employment releasing men for the Army (Mines, Factories, Munition, etc.)	10,000 June to December, 40,000 January and February 1919	150,000
Grand Total		375,000

Notes: (1) In 1918 the bulk of the men from Russia are to be put into non-combatant services instead of into civil trades, as the non-combatants thus released will require less training to become fighting soldiers.

(2) After March 1919, an additional 150,000 men might be replaced in civil life by foreigners, and possibly another 200,000 non-combatants in the Army might also be released.

It is, therefore, estimated that by the 1st March 1919, not more than 400,000 combatants will be detained for the

German Army by making use of the manpower of the occupied Russian Provinces, and that by the end of 1919 the total number might be raised to 750,000.*

**The National Archives* (Washington); R.G. 120, SWC Military Representatives; Minutes No. 1-150; December 4, 1917 to October 28, 1918; Box 21, Folder No. 318.

DOCUMENT NO. 2

Letter of Strombach to the Headquarters of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Moscow

Penza, April 3, 1918

Tonight our men have distributed in the trains of the Army Corps a great amount of our newspapers, and I drafted an article for the local *Izvestiia*. We also succeeded in establishing some contacts with the troops; tomorrow we shall have a meeting with two members of the Army Corps. (This part of the letter was written on April 3, rest on April 4, Ed.)

On April 4, in the morning, I visited the office of the Soviet with a Proclamation to be published in Russian language. A Czech printing shop is available in one train of the Army Corps; the setting of their newspaper is done there and printing in town.

The National Council has established its headquarters here, which makes the decisive struggle in Penza inevitable. I have drafted a Proclamation which will be distributed tomorrow . . .

Today at noon, the two men who during the last night distributed our newspapers among the troops of the Army Corps, have visited us. We have been told about the terrible terror among the troops and that sentries had to be reinforced by special order. Both soldiers are convinced that our campaign would succeed . . .

Last night I requested Kuraviev not to permit the trains of the Army Corps to leave Penza at any cost. Also you in Moscow must arrange that we get still more authority. We badly need agitators, office workers and other personnel.

To leave Penza now would be a mistake; this is also the view of Kuraviev. All trains of the Army Corps must pass through here.

We suggested the following procedure: each train will be permitted to leave Penza only after we finished with the propaganda work and recruitment campaign. The next train for processing will be admitted into Penza only after the departure of the train which had been processed and thus reduced to a heap of officers and servants of capitalism.

Slow transportation and its continuous interruptions have a disastrous effect upon enthusiasm for France . . . You must send us a great quantity of newspapers as well as other propaganda material and literature. In this respect money must be no consideration.

Enormous possibilities in the field of propaganda appear to be here; our task is to permeate the troops with ideas of internationalism. They are not at all familiar with socialist ideas. For this reason we cannot leave Penza and go to other places.

I must repeat the above request. You must send us plenty of propaganda literature. We need far more authority. Above all things you must categorically request the Soviet authorities to order the Penza Soviet to meet unconditionally all our demands. The task is to provide each new soldier coming over to us with everything to keep his interest: first we must fill his stomach and only later give him literature and start educate him.

The National Council has in its treasury 4 million rubles. We would claim a part of this money; whatever was contributed by our men shall be claimed.

I would like to emphasize once more that we need more authority. Also plenty of provisions for the troops is needed. The volunteers must be assured in a very diplomatic way that they would fight only German forces.

Large sums for agitation are badly needed; do not forget this . . .

Strombach.*

**Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 66-63.

DOCUMENT NO. 3

RESOLUTION

Of Commanders of the First Hussite Division

ADOPTED IN KIRSANOV ON APRIL 13, 1918

The Commanders of the First Czechoslovak Hussite Division adopted the following resolution at a meeting held under the new leadership on April 13 (March 31), 1918, at 10 A. M.:

Very slow movement of the Army Corps and the violation by the Soviet authorities of their own agreement with the Czechoslovak National Council, which had guaranteed a daily dispatch of five trains, coupled with the forcible disarmament of some trains of the Fifth and Eighth Regiments in spite of their previous surrender of arms according to the terms of that agreement, have created among the men and officers a legitimate fear that the Soviet authorities had abrogated this transportation agreement. The troops fear that after completely disarming the Fifth and the Eighth Regiments they will impose further disarmament upon rest of the troops.

Because the Soviet Government is in no position to make the local Soviets fulfil its own obligations towards the Czechoslovak Army Corps, the meeting decided to bring the following to the attention of the Commander of the Army Corps and the Czechoslovak National Council:

(1) the suspension of the transportation, and the uncertainty whether and when it will be resumed, have demoralizing effects

upon the troops, seriously undermining their discipline. It is possible that the entire Army Corps might disintegrate;

(2) should the existing situation continue it might ultimately destroy all enthusiasm of the troops for the struggle against Austro-Hungarian imperialism and the liberation of their country;

(3) the delay in transportation seriously diminishes the effectiveness of the troops and their eventual usefulness to the Allies;

(4) the suspension of transportation greatly complicates the supply arrangements; the already depleted resources of the local population will have to be drawn upon;

(5) the experience gained during the past six weeks on the territory of Russia has brought us to the conclusion that we cannot hope to remove the obstacles in the movement of our trains by an agreement with the Soviet Government. So far, the Bolsheviks have fulfilled some of their obligations towards us because they fear our armed strength. This attitude will change as soon as we disarm and deprive ourselves of the only effective means capable of bringing pressure upon them.

In view of this, the First Czechoslovak Hussite Division, as represented by its Commanders, considers the undertaking of the following steps as absolutely necessary:

(1) surrender of arms must be stopped immediately and steps taken to recover the weapons and ammunition surrendered in Penza;

(2) steps must be taken to secure more ammunition;

(3) in all railway stations in which our troops are stationed secret preparations must be made to secure locomotives and fuel;

(4) after the completion of all preparations for a forcible resumption of further transportation the Soviet authorities should be presented with a strongly worded demand requesting an immediate resumption of the movement of all our trains. This demand should also contain the following declaration:

(a) in view of the violation of the previous agreements by the Soviet authorities and their continuous attempts at complete disarmament of the Army Corps, under

- no conditions arms will be surrendered before Vladivostok;
- (b) the Soviet authorities are expected to renew the movement of our trains within 24 hours after the delivery of this ultimatum. Otherwise we would conclude that elements inspired by German High Command are working within the Soviet Government against us. The delay will further confirm the fear, widespread among the troops, that as former prisoners of war they could be exchanged and placed in the hands of the German Government. The Czechoslovaks are determined, however, to continue the struggle against Austro-German bourgeoisie; they claim the immediate resumption of free transportation towards Vladivostok their unalienable right;
 - (c) we affirm again that the only aim of our transportation across Russia is to reach Vladivostok in order to embark upon a voyage to France. On the Western Front we shall assist the Allies, particularly in view of separate peace concluded by the Soviet Government;
 - (d) while leaving Russian territory the Czechoslovaks declare their brotherly feelings towards Russian democracy and pledge in no case to interfere in Russian internal affairs. At the same time they, however, declare that any hostile activities undertaken by irresponsible elements to stop their movement will be met with a determined resistance;
 - (e) while our troops cross Russian territory and Siberia the Soviet Government will be offered hostages to assure that these troops will not be used by the Allies in the execution of their plans concerning occupation of Russia and Siberia;
 - (f) in return the Soviet Government is expected to offer hostages guaranteeing that no hostile acts will be undertaken against the Czechoslovaks, and that no further attempts will be made at arresting the free movement of their trains.

(5) This declaration will be published to inform the local population about the purpose of transportation of the Czecho-

slovak troops across Russia.

(6) This declaration will be considered as the final attempt at solving the present stalemate in transportation. A failure of the Soviet Government to respond during the given period of time would free our hand to take immediately any steps to resume the movement towards Vladivostok.

Signed

Major-General Kolomensky,
Commander of the First Czechoslovak Hussite
Division

Colonel Dorman,
Chief of Staff of the Army Corps.*

*Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, pp. 59-60.

DOCUMENT NO. 4

Armed forces of the Soviet Republic in June-July 1918

	<i>Infantry</i>	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Machine guns</i>	<i>Artillery</i>
The White Sea Military District (future Northern Front)	8,831	419	101	29
Forces engaged against the Czechoslovaks (future Eastern Front with the 1st, and the 4th Armies)	35,550	2,318	224	38
Forces of the Southern Sector	17,502	2,318	224	38
Forces of the Western Sector	3,441	463	562	96
Forces of the Petrograd District	10,514	699	235	49
Garrison of the Moscow Military District and of the City of Moscow	32,297	1,723	260	792
Forces in the Vitebsk District	7,902	—	29	8
TOTAL	116,037	7,940	1,635	1,050*

*Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas revoliutsiia*, Vol. I, pp. 143-4. He further states that as these figures do not include all internal formations and units for special tasks, these should be increased to about 200,000 infantry and 10-12,000 cavalry.

DOCUMENT NO. 5

Plan of Action Prepared by R. Gajda on May 3, 1918, in Novonikolaievsk

(1) The reconnaissance groups of Lieutenant Gerhart and Ensign Klimes will continue their work.

(2) Professor Maxa will be given a letter informing him about our planned operations and also a text of this ultimatum. (A letter was taken for him on May 2, 1918, by Lieutenant Meduna.)

(3) Steps will be taken to secure our rear trains.

(4) Names of locomotive drivers, engineers, stokers, railway technicians, administrators and telegraphists from among our men will be registered.

Probable Development of Events in Irkutsk or in Chita

(1) Our operations against the local Soviets might take place either with or without an agreement with the National Council (Professor Maxa).

(2) Should the Seventh Regiment be approached by the Soviet authorities with a request to surrender another 10 rifles beyond and above the terms of the disarmament agreement and supplies, this will be refused. We also will not permit the Soviet authorities to search our trains, stating that supplies will be given up in Chita.

These refusals might prompt the Bolsheviks into taking a number of steps against us. The situation then might develop along the following lines (the most important is alternative B):

(A) The Bolsheviks might stop the movement of the trains of the Seventh Regiment without taking any other steps.

(B) They might request a search of these trains and resort to violence to enforce this should we reject their request.

(C) They might let the trains of the Seventh Regiment go without attempting any action under B.

The Course of Action

Point A: The Bolsheviks at each railway station will be presented with a request demanding an immediate resumption of transportation. This must not sound like an ultimatum. It would deprive us of the element of surprise, relieving the enemy of the uncertainty about the course of further action. It must be anticipated that the Bolsheviks will tell us that they would have to consult higher authorities in Moscow before taking any action and that this would take some time. In this case we shall refuse to wait, allowing the Bolsheviks to negotiate merely with the Soviets of the near-by cities. If no visible results are obtained within one-two hours, then the following action will be mounted:

- (a) Each railway station will be seized, the Bolshevik guards disarmed, telegraph and locomotives occupied. All telegraphic messages will be censored and no communication of the Soviet authorities permitted with the Czech officials and the rest of the Army Corps. The railway stations will be cleared of all civilians and entire transportation suspended at least for three days. All locomotives will be kept ready under steam. Warehouses will be secured and ammunition and weapons seized. If possible, the entire operation will be carried out without bloodshed. The resisting armed German and Austrian prisoners of war will be shot on the spot.

All matters relating to this operation are beyond the competence of the Czechoslovak political representatives. The negotiations with the Bolsheviks must remain in the hands of the military. A declaration explaining the aims and purposes of our action will be made to inform Russian population.

- (b) Operations to be undertaken after each railway station had been seized are the following: All our trains in the

rear must be informed by a coded message. Concentration of the Bolshevik forces on the railway line between our trains must be prevented. In all cities along the railway line the Bolsheviks must be disarmed. The local Soviets, and in particular the Central Government in Moscow, will be warned not to press upon our rear trains with reinforcements brought from interior. Otherwise we demolish all bridges over large rivers. The rear train is specially equipped for this task. All units of the Seventh Regiment will be continuously in touch through telegraph or dispatched armed locomotives. Strong guards will be posted at all important railway junctions. In all nearby cities and villages hostages from all political groups will be taken; these must be decently and tactfully treated. Volunteers recruited from the local population will be posted to guard all important public objects. In case of sabotage all Bolshevik leaders will be shot first. In all stations under our control new bodies of local administration will be set up from elements friendly to us (Mensheviks, Kadets, Esers, etc.).

- (c) After all these instructions were carried out and the position of the Seventh Regiment secured the following steps will be taken:

The trains of the Seventh Regiment will return westward to assist the trains of the Cheliabinsk group to resume their movement. Strong detachments will be left behind to safeguard each station. After these trains had been rescued and their movement resumed the whole train column will proceed eastward in the direction of Vladivostok with the trains of the Seventh Regiment functioning as an escort. Upon reaching their home stations the trains of the Seventh Regiment will once again return westwards to occupy the middle section of the railway line stretching between the trains advancing towards Vladivostok and those still deep in the west. They will control and defend this section until the last unit of the Army Corps passed by.

Point B: In this case the Bolsheviks will be opposed by arms.

Point C: The trains of the Seventh Regiment will return and commence operations as outlined under point A.

Enclosures: (1) Text of Order No. 38/1 which must be executed at once.

(2) Code.

Captain Gajda,
Commander of the Seventh Regiment.*

*Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, pp. 547-548.

DOCUMENT NO. 6

Order No. 38/1

Confidential

In view of the grave situation facing the Army Corps all units under my command shall execute the following order:

(A) All trains of the Second Division, the aviation unit and the engineering unit are not permitted to execute any backward movement except to give armed assistance to the units in the west, in particular to those of the First Division. Should such an assistance be required this undoubtedly would mean the beginning of an armed conflict with Soviet authorities. In such a situation all railway stations in which our trains are stationed shall be seized and this reported to me.

To facilitate smooth execution of the above instruction I hereby order all units:

- (1) take out and distribute all hidden weapons;
- (2) prepare all machine guns for action and cover them with rugs. The same applies to French automatic rifles; grenades must be ready;
- (3) thorough reconnaissance of vicinity of each railway station must be undertaken to secure its swift and smooth seizure.

A plan of action giving details on the whole operation is enclosed. These instructions must be closely followed. A careful but energetic execution of the operation is essential for its success.

Until further orders, the trains of Captain Hoblik shall remain at the Omsk railway station. Captain Hoblik will daily dispatch reconnaissance parties to the city to ascertain the number of organized Bolsheviks, how many of them are armed, location of prisoners of war camp and whether the inmates are armed, whether the Bolsheviks have heavy guns, and the location of storehouses with weapons and ammunition. The reconnaissance parties should consist of officers.

Should armed action become inevitable, extensive use of grenades and bombs is essential.

Should Captain Hoblik request assistance upon finding himself in a conflict with Bolshevik forces in Omsk, Lieutenant Pokorny is ordered to assist him. If such assistance could not be given, then Captain Hoblik shall seize the city of Omsk with all his available forces; the railway station will remain under his control until the arrival of trains with reinforcements commanded by Kutlvasr or Kudela. Trains of Lieutenant Pokorny then shall remain in Barabinsk until further orders.

It is quite possible that the Soviet authorities might be willing to lift the ban upon the movement of the trains of Lieutenant Nosek. He should agree to this, but his trains must not go beyond Irkutsk. As soon as information on our engagement with the Bolsheviks reaches Lieutenant Nosek, and in absence of other instructions, he shall seize Krasnoyarsk. To prevent the Bolsheviks from attacking us from the rear their trains must be disarmed and detained at the Krasnoyarsk station. All details of this operation are left within the competence of Lieutenant Nosek. The telegraphic connection with Irkutsk must be interrupted.

The engineering units shall remain attached to the trains of Captain Kadlec until further orders.

(B) Each train must have one machine gun ready for combat. No more than one quarter of the total number of men of each train is permitted to leave and visit a city at one time. To secure the combat readiness of each train, all preparations must be undertaken immediately. The instructions concerning the deployment of the trains must be executed at once even by force of arms.

Should the trains of other regiments be present in any station along the trains of the Seventh Regiment, the oldest

officer of the Seventh Regiment shall take over their command.

The general situation has deteriorated to such an extent that a conflict is inevitable. We are on the eve of combat. All units under my command shall take orders directly from me; from others only if identical with mine.

From the moment when these instructions will be received by the units, couriers or officers shall daily be dispatched to report to me on latest developments.

Captain Gajda
Commander of the Seventh Regiment.*

* Kratochvíl, *Cesta revoluce*, pp. 65-67.

DOCUMENT NO. 7

Report of Sadlucky on the Cheliabinsk Incident Telegraphed to Trotsky's Assistant Sadovkin Between May 18 and 20, 1918

On May 14 a train with Hungarian prisoners of war had arrived in Cheliabinsk. As later was found out one Hungarian had thrown a stone, or a piece of iron, into a wagon with the Czechs. During the fight which followed . . . one Hungarian was killed. The next day, when a delegation of the Czechs appeared in our office upon the invitation of our Investigation Commission, it was imprisoned. This provoked the Czechs. They armed themselves, entered the city on May 17 at 6 P.M., and seized all cross roads, posted 4 battalions at the building of the Executive Committee of the Cheliabinsk Soviet, and deployed the rest of their forces in other streets. The railway station was also occupied and its Military Command imprisoned. But the premises of the Executive Committee of the Soviet were not entered into.

The demonstrating Czechs demanded an immediate release of their imprisoned comrades and pressed me for action. I argued that I could not release the imprisoned men because what was happening then in the streets amounted to an armed action against the Soviet Government. But the Czechs assured me of their loyalty to the Soviet Government and declared that the release of the imprisoned was their only concern. To avoid bloodshed I categorically demanded that the Czechs evacuate the city at once, warning that we could not restrain our men for long. Then, seeing the discipline of the Czechs and considering the lack of readiness on our part, I decided to let the imprisoned go. As soon as we released

these men the Czechs left the city for their trains singing folk songs.

To counteract the Czechs we mobilized all our units, deploying them in that part of the city beyond the river. While in town the Czechs also disarmed sentries at the Military Commissariat, broke the seal attached to the safe, misplaced official papers and cut the telephone lines. Then the Czechs seized a portion of stored weapons, disarmed a group of the Red Army men and took away two machine guns. The Czechs also searched people on the streets, confiscating any weapons these carried. One member of the Executive Committee of our Soviet was thus deprived of his revolver. During the encounter three Czechs were killed and two were wounded by stray bullets. Our side had no losses as the Czechs were under orders not to shoot. At present, there are about 8,400 Czechoslovaks in Cheliabinsk; out of these 1,500 are armed with rifles and 6 machine guns.

On the following day we declared martial law and then order was restored. On May 18 we requested the Czechs to return the seized weapons; the rifles and both machine guns taken away from the Red Army men have already been returned. The Command of the Czech forces also promised to return the rest of the seized weapons but begged us for patience a day or two because of the restlessness of the troops who now distrust their leadership. I was told by their leaders that the troops are restless to the point of rebellion because instead of being transported to Vladivostok by us, this had been promised by the Soviet Government, we are detaining them in Russia. If the Czech Command pressed them now for surrendering the seized weapons the excited soldiers might disobey. We wanted to disarm them but this proved impossible: first, we lack adequate forces; second, the Czechs are well aware of this. The Oblast Soviet in Yekaterinburg cannot assist because it had sent its own garrison to Orenburg. It is absolutely necessary to transfer the Czechs to Siberia. The long delay in the movement of their trains, lasting already for several months, and the uncertainty whether they would be transported at all, could provoke a powerful rebellion. And to cross arms with the Czechs now, before the uprising of the Cossacks is liquidated, would be fatal.

Upon returning to their trains the Czechs posted placards in the city reassuring that their action had not been directed against the Soviet Government but at securing the release of their comrades unjustly imprisoned by us. When I pointed out to the Czech Command how possibly it could have allowed such a thing to happen, a spontaneous movement of the masses was blamed. Now everything is quiet. From Yekaterinburg arrived an instruction to the effect that in view of the lack of forces, which had been sent to Orenburg, no attempts should be made at disarming the Czechs now and that further instructions from the Central Government with regard to the Czechs must be expected. This is all for the moment. Tomorrow, if necessary, other details. The whole affair is still under investigation . . .*

**Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 159-160.

DOCUMENT NO. 8

"... At the beginning of April Japanese forces landed in Vladivostok and, as their further plans were unknown to us, we had a very little hope that the Czechs would be able to embark in that port. Consequently, the Soviet Government decided to stop the movement of their trains, the decision being executed upon my orders. As soon as the members of the French Military Mission, and the representatives of the National Council, came to see me (the May 15 interview, Ed.), I explained to both parties that the suspension of the movement of the trains must not be interpreted as a hostile act against the Czechoslovaks and that it was dictated solely by the new political situation in the Far East. At the same time I suggested that the members of the National Council, Messrs. Maxa and Cermak, request the French and British Governments for an official declaration showing their willingness to provide the needed tonnage at Archangelsk and Murmansk. On my part I have guaranteed that at a given time, agreed upon by a bilateral agreement, the Czechoslovaks shall be transported to places specified by such an agreement. In spite of their promise Messrs. Maxa and Cermak never delivered to me such a declaration. During my private conversations with the British Representative, Mr. Lockhart, I have repeatedly emphasized that the British and French Governments should make a definite commitment with regard to the Czechoslovaks, pointing out that these people could not indefinitely live in trains, particularly during the summer months. Mr. Lockhart was unable, however, to give me a definite answer; he said that the whole matter had reached a very critical stage and that he did not know whether the British Government would be able to provide the necessary number of ships.

Thus the whole matter reached a stalemate: not because of the Soviet Government, but primarily because of the Japanese landing and then due to the impossibility of obtaining an exact statement of undertaking from the British and French Governments.

The counter-revolutionary elements lurking among the Czechoslovak troops, Russian bourgeoisie and reactionary officers exploited this uncertain state of affairs. These elements worked hard to make the rank and file of the Army Corps suspicious of the Soviet Government and convince the men that our Government planned to sell them to Germany. In a written statement I refuted all these allegations as false and concocted by scoundrels; only a fool would take them seriously.

With no answer from the British and French Governments forthcoming I suggested the following solution of the whole problem through Comrade Aralov. Should the further transportation of the Czechoslovaks appear impossible, in other words, should England and France fail to provide the ships, then the men should be given an opportunity to remain in Russia. They could engage in any profession of their liking or have been trained for: join the Red Army, set up workers' co-operatives in various trades, join the guard units, etc. Naturally, there was absolutely nothing compulsory in this proposal. It was advanced only to offer a solution should the Czechs, not because of the Soviet Government, be prevented from departing from Russia.

Unfortunately, the counter-revolutionaries and demagogues placed all these proposals, dictated solely by selfless efforts to safeguard the interests of the Czechoslovaks, in unfavourable light and made the Czechoslovaks distrust the Soviet Government . . .”*

*Trotsky L.D., *Kak vooruzhalas revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1923), Vol.I, pp. 213-215.

DOCUMENT NO. 9

"... As everybody at the Congress was convinced that no results would be obtained by further negotiations the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Congress, entrusted the three Military Commanders with the task of working out a plan of military operations. Lieutenant Cecek propounded a view that only individual trains should force their way forward; this should be executed without enlarging their operations far and wide. Colonel Wojcechovsky, on the other hand, wished immediately to seize Cheliabinsk and from this central point extend the operations further to the eastern and western flanks to effect a junction with other trains.

I could not agree with either of them. My objection to Cecek's theory was based upon a conviction that without securing at least several key junction points in advance no movement of the trains was possible. With Colonel Wojcechovsky I could not agree because: (1) not being familiar with the decisions of the Congress each train will respond in a different way to operations carried out from the centre; the lack of co-ordinated action would result in dangerous confusion; (2) the confusion will be further accentuated by the fact that we are in Cheliabinsk and not with our units. I, therefore, suggested that we should immediately depart for our regiments in order to issue the necessary instructions and then, after about 5 days, commence a concerted action all along the Trans-Siberian Railway...

A complete agreement was not reached. But one thing was clear: that the fight will come soon and that those trains now in Siberia must not give up their positions by removing themselves to Vladivostok until the rest of the trains, stationed now

between Cheliabinsk and Rtischevo, moved beyond the Urals. In spite of this *carte blanche* I returned to Novonikolaievsk with an intention to commence armed operations only after the treachery of the Bolsheviks, and their plan to destroy us . . . could be confirmed again . . .”*

*Gajda R., *Moje pameti*, pp. 23-33.

DOCUMENT NO. 10

"... The Congress unanimously and emphatically declared not to surrender arms and immediately resume the movement forward ...

Personally, I view the situation in the following way. Repressions will be mounted as soon as Moscow learns about our refusal to surrender arms; individual trains will have to defend themselves until the strong Penza group could bring relief. The trains between Samara and Omsk could move eastward only after the Penza group crossed the Volga River. It must be anticipated that the attempts forcibly to disarm these individual trains will lead to local armed incidents; this is the real danger ...

The Congress elected a Provisional Executive Committee and entrusted it with the task of freeing the line to Vladivostok at any cost, even forcibly. But no Russian blood should be spilled as long as possible ... Many Bolsheviks sympathize with us. Here, in Cheliabinsk, it is most unlikely that the Red Army and the militia would fight us; but the situation would change as soon as Russian blood flows. Intensive fraternization with Russians is under way here and the results are really gratifying; but this favourable climate will not last indefinitely ...

As we do not know when you might start the advance of the Penza group we are planning gradually to concentrate towards Cheliabinsk the isolated trains now dispersed between Cheliabinsk and Samara. It would be dangerous to leave them so dispersed. These trains are too few to secure Bardaush, Czizhmy, Kinel and Syzran. And it would be dangerous to weaken the Cheliabinsk group by sending reinforcements to

these trains and regroup when the whole line, and all communications, are not in our hands. The only solution of this situation is a rapid advance of the strong Penza group towards Cheliabinsk.

It is important to execute all these operations without violence; but how long this non-militant nature of our operations can be maintained is hard to say. I believe not too long . . . During the last few days intensive preparations have been taking place around us; men and ammunition and weapons are concentrated and Soviet military trains come and go. Undoubtedly, a part of these preparations is against us . . . It must be anticipated that in Omsk an attempt will be made to disarm those trains which took part in the Cheliabinsk incident. This, of course, will lead to an explosion all along the railway line . . .”*

**Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 176-178.

DOCUMENT NO. 11

"Cheliabinsk, May 25, 1918. No. 3825. Weapons in the hands of the Czechoslovaks are exclusively for self-defence. Hostility and armed clashes between the Czechoslovak and the Russian armies must be avoided at all cost. Weapons will be used only in self-defence, and only after the Czech units were attacked. The movement of trains towards Vladivostok is being executed under orders of the congress. The movement has been resumed in order to stop the growing restlessness among the men incited by a protracted stalemate in transportation, and by the resolve of the Soviet Government to disarm all units of the Army Corps.

The congress will consider as an unfriendly act any attempt at stopping the movement of our trains towards Vladivostok; equally will be considered any attempt at disarming our units. These attempts will vigorously be resisted. The ensuing conflicts could easily be exploited by various political groups and dark elements, and could result in a grave situation all along the railway line in Siberia. These considerations prompted the congress to request you to desist from hostile acts against the Czechoslovaks, and from placing obstacles on their way to Vladivostok. The terms of the Penza Agreement must be honoured.

It is in the interest of both parties to free Cheliabinsk of all Czechoslovak trains as soon as technically possible. The congress requests you to remove all obstacles which until now have been straining the friendly relations between the Czechoslovaks and the Russians."*

*Zmrhal K., *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirské armáde*, pp. 154-155.

DOCUMENT NO. 12

"Here is Boyarsky, Moscow. Please give me a detailed account of the situation in town. How the matter stands with the Czechoslovaks, how many trains they have, whether these are disarmed, and whether clashes took place.

Here is Military Commander Ostrovsky. The town is quiet. Last night, at one after midnight, the National Council was requested to order its troops to surrender all arms. The Council, however, gave an evasive answer in this manner: 'Should the troops themselves prove willing to disarm the Council would not object because it wishes to avoid bloodshed.' Today we are organizing a public meeting with the Czech troops. Trotsky's order to disarm and dissolve their units will be read there. Under the existing conditions it is quite impossible to resort to violence and use extreme measures. The reason is that in Penza, at the Riazansk-Ural Station, there are 3 Czech trains with 1,500 men, armed also with machine guns. In addition, only 18 versts from Penza, in Krivozerec, there are another 1,500 men and, further in the direction of Rtischevo, 5 armed trains.

In Penza our forces consist of 500 men of our own, of 100 our men returned to us by Ruzaievka, and of 100 men sent by Saransk. Reinforcements are expected from Rtischevo, Serdobsk and Simbirsk.

In spite of this, a victory cannot be assured should the Czechs strike to force upon us a decisive battle. But irrespective of the prospects all efforts will be made to achieve the disarmament and dissolution of the Czech units. Today the whole matter will be solved in one or other way. We are expecting assistance also from you.

Boyarsky: At the meeting you must exert yourself to create a mood among the masses conducive to a peaceful surrender of arms. Should this fail, then you must at once resort to militant measures. From this end some assistance is being sent to you . . .”*

**Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 227-228.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1. Kratochvil J., *Cesta Revoluce* (The Path of Revolution), Praha, Cin, 1928, pp. 40-1.

2. J. Patejdl, *Sibirska anabase* (Praha: Památník Odboje, 1923), pp. 17-18. Maxa testified that such a cable of Lenin was received in Voronezh on March 16, 1918; V. Vavra, *Klamná cesta: Příprava a vznik protisovětského vystoupení čs. legii* (Praha: Náše Vojsko, 1958), pp. 142-143.

3. J. Vavra, *Z boju za svobodu a socialismus: Úloha SSSR v osvobozeneckých bojích a budovatelském úsilí českého a slovenského lidu* (Praha: Čsl. akademie věd, 1961), pp. 157-158.

4. R. Medek, O. Vaníček, V. Holeček (Eds.), *Za svobodu, Obrazková kronika Čsl. revolučního hnutí na Rusi 1914-1920* (Praha: Nakladem vlastním, 1925-29), Vol. III, p. 12.

5. *The National Archives* (Washington), The Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1125.

6. J. Sadoul, *Notes sur la Revolution Bolchevique* (Paris: Edition de la Sirene, 1920), p. 243.

7. O.K. Cumming and W. W. Pettit, *Russian-American Relations March 1917-March 1920: Documents and Papers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 104. Also a cable of American Ambassador in Russia, D.R. Francis, to the Department of State of March 20, 1918, in the *National Archives* (Washington), The Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1341.

8. Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

9. V.A. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o grazhdanskoi voine* (Moskva: 1928), Vol. II, p. 94.

10. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States-Russia, 1918* (Washington: Government Printing Office,

1931), Vol. I, p. 487. See also Trotsky's request given to Riggs on March 21, 1918, in *The National Archives* (Washington), Foreign Affairs Branch, Sisson Documents File, Box 1, Enclosure No. 22 to the Dispatch No. 1386, dated on July 15, 1918. Also G.F. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene, Soviet-American Relations 1917-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 114.

11. Sadoul, *Quarante Lettres de Jacques Sadoul* (Paris: Librairie de L'Humanite, 1922), letter of March 24, 1918.

12. Vavra, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159; also Patejdl, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.

13. Patejdl, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.

14. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

16. Patejdl, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

17. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

18. Antonov-Ovseienko, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 94.

19. *Loc. cit.*, Vavra puts an entirely different interpretation upon the origin of this first serious deadlock between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks. In the first place, Vavra completely ignores Aralov's cable of March 20. Not a word. Then he offers the following explanation.

It was about on March 22 that Kuraviev informed the Czechs in Penza regarding the demand that the movement of the trains must be immediately stopped and all troops completely disarmed. When a delegation, led by Maxa, called upon Kuraviev for an explanation it was told that the order originated with Antonov-Ovseienko who had discovered that some trains had failed to surrender all weapons, particularly artillery equipment, as agreed between him and the Czechs.

Kuraviev further complained about Russian officers serving in the Army Corps and their behaviour. He mentioned an incident involving General Podgaisky, Commander of the Second Division. The general, upon hearing that the Soviet authorities had ordered to stop the movement of the trains, appeared in the local Soviet with a group of fully armed men and threatened to hang Kuraviev were the transportation not renewed.

Kuraviev reported the whole matter to Moscow, and as an answer received from Stalin an order to the effect that all

Czech troops must be completely disarmed at once. Vavra, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.

Obviously, Kuraviev was not telling the Czechs the whole story; not a word about Aralov's cable of March 20. Moreover, there was no specific agreement between the Czechs and Antonov-Ovseienko on disarmament, except for a general understanding that the Czechs would surrender all heavy artillery equipment and excessive weapons. As we have seen, the Penza Soviet itself admitted to Antonov-Ovseienko that the order to stop and disarm the Czechs came from Moscow. Vavra, however, accepts Kuraviev's explanation to Maxa.

20. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

21. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 86.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 15; also Patejdl, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

23. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 24-25; also p. 38. For the text of the Penza Agreement which was then concluded see Zmrhal K., *Armada ducha druhe mile* (Praha: no date), pp. 12-13.

24. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 20.

25. Steidler, *Nase vystoupeni v Rusku 1918*, p. 9.

26. In demanding complete disarmament of the Czech troops Karakhan, Trotsky and Stalin referred to the terms of the peace treaty. These references led the Czech leaders to conclude that the Soviet Government was under an acute pressure from Berlin at that time. They believed that the government had overruled Lenin's permission of March 15 upon orders from Berlin. This belief, totally unfounded as it is clear today, was an important factor which contributed to the growth of antagonism among the Czechs against the Bolsheviks. See Patejdl, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21; Steidler, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

27. Patejdl, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21; also Steidler, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

28. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 66.

29. *Loc. cit.*

30. Krizek, *Penza*, p. 30.

31. Vavra, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159, 202-203, 223-225.

32. The troops favoured a firm posture against the Bolsheviks. Even before the terms of the Penza Agreement became known the troops had challenged the wisdom of the policies of the National Council. An entry on March 25, 1918 in the *Diary of the 6th Company of the 5th Regiment* stated: "The soldiers feel increasingly hostile toward the political leadership

because, as rumours go, it is disposed to concessions." *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 70-71. For Order No. 35 see Kudela J., *S nasim vojskem na Rusi*, Vol. II, pp. 39-40.

The lack of firmness on the part of the political and military leadership of the Army Corps, and the distrust in the motives of the Bolsheviks because of the continuous propaganda of the Czech Communists that the Army Corps will be forcibly or otherwise dissolved, prompted some soldiers to hide rifles, short arms, grenades and ammunition (*Loc. cit.*).

In one case, reported in the documents of the Archives of History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and concerning the Fifth Battalion of the Eighth Regiment, "far before Penza" an order was given to remove the boards of the ceilings in each train and hide there weapons, including automatic rifles, ammunition and others. Machine guns and grenades were hidden in cars with food supplies, buried in sugar and flour. These cars were then sealed and marked as food supplies. Document No. 62/65628, box 31, cited by J. Kvasnicka, *Ceskoslovenske Legie v Rusku: 1917-1920* (Bratislava: Vydavatelstvo slovenskej akademie vied, 1963), p. 83.

While it is true that this initiative was taken by the troops themselves and in some cases even by individual officers, the contention of Soviet and Czech Communist historians that a very large number of arms had been hidden upon explicit instructions of the National Council and the military command has no basis in fact. Kvasnicka could identify only the above cited instance in the vast archives of the Communist Party.

33. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 22-26.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

35. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, March 29, 1918; also Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, p. 43.

36. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 35-36.

37. These figures are taken from the documents of the National Council seized by the Bolsheviks in its Moscow Office on May 11, 1918. They were published in a collection of documents pertaining to the activities of the Army Corps and the Czech Communists in Russia, entitled *Cechoslovaci ve valce a v revoluci; Sbirka oficialnich dokumentu o hnuti imperalistickem a komunistickem mezi Cechy a Slovaky v Rusku*

(Kiev-Moskva: 1919). Some documents concerning the financial transactions of the Czechs and French are quoted by Krizek, *Penza. Slavia bojova tradice ex. rudoarmejcu* (Praha: Nase vojsko, 1956), p. 112.

38. Sip himself gave an account of these negotiations and described the financial and economic aspects of the activities of the Czechs in Russia in his book entitled *Nekolik kapitol o hospodarstvi nasi sibirske armady* (Praha: Tiskem a nakladem Legiografia, 1926). For the negotiations in March 1918, see pp. 10-11. The following work deals also with the financial matters of the Army Corps in Russia: J. Polak, *Peneznictvi v ruskych legiich* (Praha: Pamatnik Odboje, 1924).

39. Reports of Klecanda in Patejdl, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21; also Steidler, *Nase vystoupeni v Rusku 1918*, p. 7.

40. *Kronika 3, streleckeho pluku Jana Zizky z Trocnova* (Praha: 1927), pp. 107-108.

41. K. Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile* (Praha: no date), p. 17. A more detailed examination of the motives which prompted the Soviet in Irkutsk to oppose the entry of the Czechs into Siberia is beyond the scope of this study. To what extent its fears of Japanese invasion of Siberia were justified can be ascertained from a study by J.W. Morely, *The Japanese Thrust Into Siberia, 1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

Some Czech sources suggest that the chief reason for the hostility of the Soviet in Irkutsk towards the Czechs was the fact that it was controlled to a great extent by German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war serving in the Red Army. The service of prisoners of war in the Red Army, and the impact of this association upon Czech-Bolshevik relations, was profound. According to Czech reports, Commissar Sternberg from the Irkutsk Soviet, who opposed the entry of the Czechs into Siberia at the meeting of the Soviet on March 22 was a German agent of Swedish nationality who had entered Russia via Finland in the uniform of a Russian officer and became the Chief of Staff of the Red Army in Irkutsk. The Director of Communications of the Irkutsk Military District, a man of obscure background, was Lieutenant-General Von Taube, who organized prisoners of war in that region. Another prominent leader of the Bolshevik forces, who commanded operations

against Semenov, was a Hungarian prisoner of war, Ensign Sergei Lazo.

For the cable of the Soviet in Irkutsk of March 28, 1918 see Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile*, pp. 24-25.

42. Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile*, p. 17.

43. Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, p. 57.

44. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 50.

45. *Loc. cit.*

46. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 8, 1918.

47. *Loc. cit.*

48. *Loc. cit.*

49. *Loc. cit.*

50. *Loc. cit.*

51. *Loc. cit.*

52. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1918.

53. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1918; also *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 53.

54. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 72.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 53; also p. 74.

56. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 15, 1918.

57. *Loc. cit.*

58. *Loc. cit.*

59. *Loc. cit.*

60. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 40. It is not certain whether it was a good personal diplomacy of the two men, or whether they had bribed some members of the Soviet, which made the Bolsheviks in Irkutsk friendly. Girska was given by the Financial Commission half a million rubles for the explicit purpose of bribing the train drivers, stokers, telegraphists, administrative staff and members of the Soviets. J. Kvasnicka, *Ceskoslovenske legie v Rusku: 1917-1920* (Bratislava: Vydavatelstvo slovenskej akademie vied, 1963), p. 93.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

63. *Loc. cit.*

64. *Loc. cit.* It seems that some misunderstanding between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks was due to the confusion about the actual terms of the Penza Agreement. From Czech sources it is clear that the Czech military command demanded as a minimum 168 rifles, 300 cartridges for each rifle, one machine gun and 12,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition

per each train of about 700-800 troops. The demand was telephoned by Kuraviev to Moscow.

Vavra, however, maintains that the Soviet Government modified these terms, and that Stalin cabled to Penza on March 26 that the Czechs could retain only 100 rifles per 1,000 troops. Vavra further alleges that the Czech command did not comply with Stalin's terms, and that in *Ceskoslovensky dennik* on March 28 it published its own version contained in Order No. 35 of March 27. Vavra alleges that the Soviet in Cheliabinsk had in hand the text of the agreement which provided for 100 rifles per 1,000 men. He fails, however, to give the exact date of the document, which does not make it clear whether the text contained the original terms of the agreement as cabled by Stalin on March 26, or whether the text embodied the modified terms as later proposed by Klecanda to Trotsky. Vavra *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178. The latter seems to be the case.

65. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 78.

66. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 86. In another letter, written in Samara on April 12, Maxa pleads with his colleagues in Penza: "Make sure that the trains are not stopped in Penza and that all conditions of the Soviet authorities are exactly fulfilled. Any incorrectness causes only delays . . ." *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 77.

67. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 78.

68. *Loc. cit.*

69. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

70. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 38.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

75. Patejdl *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

76. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, May 28, 1918; also *Ibid.*, May 2, 1918.

77. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, May 8, 1918.

78. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 93-94.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

81. Morley, *The Japanese Thrust Into Siberia 1918*, pp. 193-197.

82. Benes, *Svetova valka*, Vol. III, pp. 631-632. For a detailed study of the evolution of the Franco-British policies towards the Legion see J.F.N. Bradley, "The Allies and the Czech Revolt Against the Bolsheviks in 1918", *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 43, June 1965, pp. 275-92. Also his *La Legion Tchecoslovaque en Russie, 1914-1920*, Paris, 1965, first major work on the topic after the World War II.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 633-634.

84. *The National Archives* (Washington), Record Group 120, Supreme War Council, Military Representatives, Minutes No. 1-150; December 4, 1917 to October 28, 1918, Box 21, Folder 329.

85. This account is based upon the record of a conference which the Czech leaders had with General Lavergne in Moscow on May 14, 1918. As soon as the National Council in Omsk learnt that the Army Corps would have to be divided, a delegation was deputed to see the French military authorities in Moscow to find out how the plan originated. Patejdl, *Sibirská anabase*, pp. 24-25.

In fact, Ogorodnik had approached directly the Czech leaders in their office in Moscow. He had an interview with Dr. Svagrovsky, to whom he repeated the proposal which he had made to Lavergne earlier. Ogorodnik said that he knew about the difficulties which the Czech troops were experiencing in crossing Siberia. He had been appointed by the government to organize the defences in the north, and would welcome it if the Czechs sent a part of their troops to Archangelsk. He said that "the Czech troops could be used in Russia should there be a German attack from Finland." Vavra, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

This evidence refutes Vavra's attempt to show that Ogorodnik's plan originated with the Allies. Vavra alleges that the Allies planned to use the Czech troops for an anti-Bolshevik intervention in the north. Vavra, *op. cit.*, pp. 193, 195-197.

86. Benes, *Svetova valka*, Vol. III, pp. 534-535.

87. Also *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 122, 144 and 145-147.

88. Benes, *Svetova valka*, Vol. III, pp. 636-637.

89. *Loc. cit.*

90. *The National Archives* (Washington), The Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1619.

91. *Loc. cit.*

92. *The National Archives* (Washington), The Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 851.00/1703.

93. Benes, *Svetova volka*, Vol. II, p. 189.

94. *Loc. cit.*

95. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, p. 145.

96. *The National Archives* (Washington), Record Group 120, Supreme War Council, Military Representatives, Minutes No. 1-150; December 4, 1917 to October 28, 1918, Box 21, Folder 335.

97. *Ibid.*, Folder 373.

98. The British instructors dispatched to Murmansk in May 1918 were to train and organize the Czech troops, expected to number about 20,000. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, p. 145. This expectation was obviously based upon *Joint Note No. 25* and related to the troops of the First Army Corps. About 20,000 of these troops were west of Omsk, to be shipped to the northern ports.

99. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 96-97.

CHAPTER II

1. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 5, 1918.

2. The documents of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the Czechoslovak Red Army were then deposited in the archives of Vojensky historicky ustav (Institute of Military History) in Prague.

3. Krizek, *Penza*, p. 115; also Document No. 6.

4. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 8, 1918. An article entitled "The Way Is Free Again". Also Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 120-121.

5. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 65-66.

6. Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 120-121.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 32; also *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 8, 1918; also Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 120-123. For Order No. 34 see Kudela, *S nasim vojskem na Rusi*, Vol. II, p. 79.

8. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 64.

9. F. Popov, *Chekho-Slovatskii miatezh i samarskaia uchredilka* (Moskva: 1932), pp. 22-23; J. Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce* (Praha: 1928); Krizek, *Penza*, p. 121.

10. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 12, 1918.

11. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 56.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

13. The interview was reported in an article entitled "A Friendly Discussion with the Chairman of the Penza Soviet", in *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 15, 1918.

14. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 72; also Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, p. 61.

The Czech Communists replaced the Bolsheviks on the Commission, who had been dismissed by Kuraviev. In fact, the Bolshevik Chairman of the Commission was later arrested because he had been bribed by the Czech command and permitted some trains to leave Penza with more weapons than allowed under the Penza Agreement, as revealed in Samara on April 13.

The new Commission, composed entirely of the Czech Communists, functioned better for a while, until the Czech command bribed its new Chairman, Brabec, who was then dismissed and arrested. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

15. A report of F. Eisenberger to the National Council of April 24, 1918, cited by Krizek, *Penza*, p. 125.

16. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, May 14, 1918.

17. Problems created by indiscipline and excesses in drinking and gambling appeared a continuous sore for the command. See Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 142-144. People expelled from the Army Corps for drinking and gambling often found their way into the ranks of the Red Army; *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 64.

18. All figures, and those in the following narrative, are taken from Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 141-142.

19. Krizek, *J. Hasek v revolucnim Rusku*, p. 195. The Communist regime in Prague made a considerable effort to capitalize upon the revolutionary past of Hasek, the celebrated author of *Good Soldier Svejek*. The activities of the Czech Bolsheviks in Penza, and their struggle with the Army Corps, were described by Jaroslav Krizek. Though Krizek had access to all primary source material about the origin of the conflict, he adopted the "official" interpretation which had been produced in Moscow in the early twenties; however, in some respects, he has shown a considerable restraint and modification.

20. Krizek J., *J. Hasek v revolucnim Rusku*, p. 197.

21. As one member of the National Council, F. Fiser,

reported from Samara, Hasek was more interested in co-operating directly with Masaryk and his National Council in Paris. He planned to approach Masaryk with a request permitting him to call his groups in Samara and Omsk the Second Czechoslovak Revolutionary Army Corps. See *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 121-122.

22. Krizek, *J. Hasek v revolucnim Rusku*, p. 220. There was no real chance for Hasek to challenge successfully the new policy his comrades in Moscow had adopted towards the Army Corps. He fought a lost battle and later paid for it. The case of Hasek's deviation was dealt with at a special meeting of the Czech Communist Party in Moscow on May 24, 1918, one day before the opening of the party's founding congress. Because the Kiev delegation advocated stern measures against Hasek, while the Moscow members called for leniency, this disciplinary meeting was deadlocked. It was decided that Hasek's case should not be dealt with at the congress but referred to the Executive Committee. *Ibid.*, p. 207. The decision of the Executive Committee is not known. It seems that Hasek was expelled from the party.

Hasek's further fate was checkered. After the Battle of Lipiag and the fall of Samara into the hands of the men from the Army Corps on June 8, Hasek disappeared and roamed around about until December 1918 when he joined Russian Bolsheviks. This was a period of his great personal crisis because the command of the Army Corps had issued a warrant for his arrest. He would have been court-martialed and perhaps hanged, as happened to a good number of Czech Bolsheviks caught with arms in hand during the conflict with the Army Corps. On December 28, 1918 Hasek became a member of the Political Department of the Fifth Russian Army and a member of the Editorial Board of its paper. Later, in Bugulma, he became commander of that city.

For Hasek's hilarious account of his activities there see his *Velitelem mesta Bugulmy* (Commander of Bugulma City), Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto, 1976. Jan Benes wrote a perceptive and perhaps best assessment of Hasek's personal and literary legacy in *Ibid.*, Preface, pp. 7-27, describing him as a confused and supreme egoist. Hasek parted with Bolshevism, returned to Prague in 1920 and drank himself to death in 1923.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
24. Report of a member of the Recruiting Commission, F. Fiser, from Samara to the National Council, of May 10, 1918; *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 140.
25. Krizek, *Penza*, p. 125.
26. *Ceskoslovensky dennik*, April 16, 1918.
27. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1918.
28. Markovic reported to Klecanda in Moscow on April 23, 1918: "... Officially, we are not permitted to operate here. We have to work illegally . . ." *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 84.
29. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 140.
30. Krizek, *Penza*, p. 107.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
32. Vesely, writing in 1953-54, asserted that from the beginning of March until the end of May 1918 some 6,000 men had been recruited into the Czechoslovak Red Army; see his *Cesi a Slovaci v revolucnim Rusku*, p. 95. No evidence supports his claim. Another author, writing after the de-Stalinization in 1958, rejects this claim as exaggerated; Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
- Maxa estimated on April 23, 1918 that about one per cent of the troops deserted since February of that year, which would mean some 400 men; *Loc. cit.* His estimate, however, included deserters who had joined the Bolsheviks, in Kiev in December 1917-February 1918, went to the front to assist the Soviets to repel the attack of Berlin mounted on February 18, 1918, and went to bits in that combat. Those who saved themselves appeared in Penza at the end of March, as has been mentioned.
- At the end of 1917 the Army Corps had 38,500 men in its ranks. Recruitment in Siberia during spring and summer 1918 brought in some 22,000 new men. It is probable that at the time of Maxa's estimate at the end of April the Army Corps consisted of over 40,000 troops.
33. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 84.
34. In fact, the original proposal on the establishment of the Bureau was made by the Czech Communists to the Bolsheviks. See Krizek, *Penza*, p. 70. The Congress is discussed by Vesely in *Cesi a Slovaci v Revolucnim Rusku 1917-1920*, pp. 212-213.
35. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 122.
36. These documents were cited by Lenin and Trotsky at the Joint Meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist

Party and Moscow City Soviet, held on July 29, 1918. They were to prove that the conflict had been planned well in advance, possibly in March 1918, and executed upon instructions of France and Britain. V.I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* (Moskva: 1950), Vol. XXVIII, pp. 1-2; also L. Trotsky, *Kak voorushalas revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1923), p. 222.

CHAPTER III

1. An account of the collapse of the Russian Imperial Army is given by M.M. Pokrovsky (Ed), *Razlozhenie armii v 1917 godu* (Moskva: 1925).

See also A. Wildman, "The February Revolution in the Russian Army", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 22, 1970-71, pp. 3-23.

2. V.I. Startsev, *Ocherki po petrogradskoi krasnoi guardii i rabochei militsii: Mart 1917-April 1918 gg.* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1965), pp. 274, 292.

The whole question of the number of troops which the Bolsheviks commanded at that time is wide open to further research. See for example D.N. Collins, "A note on the Numerical Strength of the Russian Red Guards in October 1917", *Soviet Studies*, Glasgow, Vol. 24, 1972-73, pp. 270-80.

For the role of the Latvian Guard see Stanley W. Page and Andrew Ezergailis, "The Lenin-Latvian Axis in the November Seizure of Power", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Ottawa, Vol. XIX, No. 1, March 1977, pp. 32-49.

3. N. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1925), p. 129.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-1.

5. *Loc. cit.* For the liquidation of the Southern Front see Ovsienko's own account in *Zapisky o grazhdanskoi voine* (Moskva: 1929), Vol. I.

6. Kakurin, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-2.

7. *Loc. cit.*

8. *The National Archives* (Washington); Record Group 120; The Supreme War Council, Military Representatives, Minutes No. 1-150, December 4, 1917 to October 23, 1918; Box No. 21. The Joint Note No. 20 of April 8, 1918; par. 2/c.

9. All the above and following figures from Kakurin, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-2.

Kakurin's figures are closely corroborated by the estimates prepared by the Intelligence Department of the Supreme Command of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces entitled *Kriegsgliederung der russ. Streitkräfte nach den Feststellungen bis zum 17/4 1918 (Von Sud nach Nord)*, Österreichisches Stattsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Vienna, Feile 5805, 1918, AOK/NA Russland, Telegramme, Berichte, ohne Nummer, Janner-Oktober.

The estimates total up to 128-142,000 men, which are broken down as follows:

Ukrainian Front: (a) 3rd Army east of lower Dniepr 5,000 men; (b) 4th Army east of Yekaterinoslav-Kharkov 5,200 men; (c) 5th Army north-east of Kharkov, east of Kursk 2,500 men; (d) Donetsk area 20,000 men; (e) Krassov 7,000 men; (f) Taganrog 15,000 men. Total 54,750 men.

Western Front: (a) 1st Army around Briansk 3,500 men; (b) 2nd Army at Rogachev and north of Mogilev 3-5,000 men; (c) 3rd Red Army in the area of Orsha-Smolensk-Vitebsk-Polotsk 10,000 men. Total 16-18,500 men.

Northern Front: (a) around Porchov-Novgorod-Luga-Pskov some 3,000 men including the Latvian Guard; (b) some units at Narva; (c) in and around Petrograd 10-20,000 men; (d) Finland 20,000 men; east of Helsinki 10,000 men. Total 43-53,000 men.

Moscow: 5-6,000 men.

Tsaritsyn: 10,000 men.

However, these estimates must be considerably reduced because the many units listed under their old Tsarist names had been demobilized on March 2, 1918, and were in the process of dissolution at the time the intelligence officers made them in those listed localities; in fact, they ceased to exist as military formations and cannot be considered as fighting forces of the Bolsheviks.

The forces commanded by the Bolsheviks at that time can be considered only those which are listed in the report as the "Red Army" or "Red Guard". After counting these units then the following picture emerges: (1) Western Front 16,000; (2) Northern Front 12-23,000; (3) Moscow 5-6,000 and Tsaritsyn 10,000. Total 44-55,000 of men. The estimate for Tsaritsyn is

NOTES

much exaggerated, perhaps 2,000 would be more accurate. The adjusted total then amounts to 36-47,000 Bolshevik troops, and approximates well Kakurin's figures.

These troops included the entire 6th Latvian Regiment of 2,500 men ordered by Lenin to Petrograd on November 21, 1917, and some parts of the 2, 5, 7 and 8th Latvian Regiments, which perhaps gave to the Bolsheviks a total of some 4,000 Latvian Guard, or Strel Strelki. For the 6th Regiment see Andrew Ezregailis, *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia*, East European Quarterly, Boulder, 1974, p. 253. For the rest of the Latvian Strelki see the report of the Austrian Supreme Command cited above.

As mentioned before, our estimates must be considered provisional and tentative until further evidence, and the whole problem of the number of the Bolshevik troops in those critical days is wide open to further research. A good beginning is made by Collins and Page and Ezergailis in their articles cited

10. Startsev, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

11. The only available account of the beginning of the Army is given by D. Ereimeiev, "Nachalo Krasnoi Armii", in *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* (Moskva), No. 4, 1928, pp. 154-169. However, no figures are given; also E. Wollenberg, *The Red Army* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), pp. 9-16; also Thal B., *Istoriia Krasnoi Armii* (Moskva-Leningrad: 1929).

12. O'Ballance estimated that during January-March 1918 the Red Army had 40,000 troops in its ranks. No documentary evidence supports his estimate. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Red Army* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 37.

Wollenberg estimated that the Red Army had in its ranks 306,000 troops on May 10, 1918. Also here no documentary evidence is offered. E. Wollenberg, *The Red Army*, p. 42.

Soviet writer, N.I. Shatagin, estimated that on May 20, 1918 the Red Army had 263,780 men. After the general mobilization mounted during June this number increased and on July 1 reached 362,435. Shatagin suggests that to that number must be added 37,950 men in the Red Guard units, 53,929 volunteers in the partisan and party units, and over 25,000 men in the Quartermaster's Corps. This would bring Shatagin's estimate to 450,000 men. But this high figure is considerably scaled down by his further qualifications to the effect that out

of that number only 185,386 were armed, 49,068 trained, and mere 17,039 in combat readiness.

This last figure is important. Shatagin's estimate of the number of troops in the Red Army on May 20 and July 1 seems to be greatly inflated by the volunteers who had registered but never showed up. It seems that in order to arrive at a more probable picture of the armed forces of the Soviet Government in July 1918 we have to consider only Shatagin's information concerning the 38,000 Red Guards, 54,000 volunteers in the partisan and party units, which undoubtedly included the Internationalists, and 25,000 men in the Quartermaster's Corps. The total is 117,000, and surprisingly tallies with Kakurin's estimate of 125,000 men in the Bolshevik armed forces at the end of July, shown in Document No. 4. N.I. Shatagin, *Organizatsiia i stroitelstvo Sovetskoi Armii v 1918-1920 gg.* (Moskva: 1954), p. 63.

Another estimate is made by Klevanskii, who writes that on May 28, 1918 the armed forces of the Soviet Government totalled 294,821 men. This number included the men serving in the Red Army, Red Guards, volunteers in special units set up by the party, volunteers organized by various nationalities, and the Internationalists. However, out of this total only 198,000 were armed, which approaches Shatagin's estimate. Perhaps Klevanskii's estimates have to be scaled down all along the line to Shatagin's figures. A. Kh. Klevanskii, *Chekhoslovatskie internatsionalisty i prodannyi korpus* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1965), p. 209.

13. The most comprehensive work was prepared under the direction of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Academy of Science of the Soviet Union, entitled *Internatsionalisty v boiakh za vlast sovetov* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Mysl, 1965). See also L.I. Iakovlev, *Internatsionalnaia solidarnost trudiasshichsia: 1917-1922* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1964); L.I. Zharov and V.M. Ustinov, *Internatsionalnye chasti krasnoi armii v boiakh za vlast sovetov v godu innostrannoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny* (Moskva: Voiennoie izdatelstvo ministerstva ožorony SSSR, 1969).

The Internationalists of various nationalities are treated by the following works. The Czechoslovaks by A. Kh. Klevanskii (*op. cit.*); the Hungarians by A. Kladt and V. Kondratiev,

NOTES

Bratiz po oruzhliu. Vengrenskie internatsionalisty v borbe za vlast sovetov v Rossii: 1917-1922 (Moskva: 1954); the Poles by A. Ia. Manusevich, *Polskie internatsionalisty v borbe za pobedu soverskoi vlasti v Rossii: Fevral Oktiabr 1917 g.* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1955); the Yugoslavs by I D. Ochak, *Yugoslavskie internatsionalisty v borbe za pobedu soverskoi vlasti v Rossii: 1917-1921* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo moskovskovo universiteta, 1955); the Romanians by V M. Rozhko, *Druzhba, zakalennai v boiakh. Rumanskie internatsionalisty v velikoi oktiabrskoi revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voine: 1917-1920* (Kishinev: 1965). also a study by the Institut fur Partaigeschichte beim ZK der RAP, entitled *Erinnerungen Ehemaliger Rumanischer Freiwilliger in der Roten Armee an die Grosse Sozialistische Oktober Revolution und den Burger Krieg: 1917-1922* (Bukarest. Staatsverlag fur Politische Literatur, 1957); and the Chinese by N.A. Popov, *Oni s nami srazhals za vlast sovetov. Kitaiskie dobrovoltsy na frontakh grazhdanskoi voyny v Rossii. 1917-1922* (Leningrad 1959). Also *Bojova piesen zniela. Spomienky slovenskych cervenoarmejcov ucastnikov vel'kej oktobrovej socialistickej revolucie a obcianskej vojny v sovietskom rusku* (Bratislava: Slovenske vydavatelstvo politickej literatury, 1958); D.I. Boiko-Pavlov and Ye. P. Sidorchik, *Tak bylo na dalnem востоке* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo sotsialno-ekonomicheskoi literatury, Mysl, 1954).

14. Krizek, Penza. *Slavna bojova tradice cs. rudoarmejcu*, p. 81.

15. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.000/1223.

16. This section is based on an account of I I. Ulianov, who drew upon the archives of the Bureau of Prisoners of War. See his article "Oktiabrskai revoliutsia i voennoplennye", in *Proletarskai revoliutsia* (Moskva), No. 7, 1928, p. 97 and ff. Another work dealing with the prisoners of war of the Central Powers in Russia is an account of E. Brandstrom, who was in charge of Swedish Red Cross work in Russia. See her book entitled *Among the Prisoners of War in Russia and Siberia* (London: 1929). Another work having information on the prisoners of war in Russia is by M. Klante, entitled *Von der Volga zum Amur: Die Tschechische Legion und der Russische Burgerkrieg* (Berlin—Koenigsberg: 1931). This was a Doctoral

Dissertation; research was done in the Archives of the Army Corps in Prague.

17. All figures from Ulianov, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

18. *Pochoden*, February 23, 1918.

19. For the report on the congress see *Izvestiia*, April 15, 1918. The Moscow Headquarters of the Bureau of Prisoners of War recruited many prisoners from Moscow and its Military Okrug for the Red Army. The Bureau itself employed 2,863 men, and during the spring months of 1918 organized 59 large public meetings, 278 small meetings and 28 private gatherings in Moscow. In the campaign organized in Moscow Okrug 240 agitators and instructors participated. Ulianov, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-9.

20. J. Bunyan and H.H. Fisher. *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918: Documents and Materials* (Stanford University Press: 1934), p. 95.

21. See, for example, an article of F. Valchar and L. Forst, "Organizatsiia voenoplennikh v Simbirske", in *1918 god na rodine Lenina* (Kuibyshevskoe Izdatelstvo: 1936), pp. 135-52.

The prisoners of war in the Red Army played an important role in forcing the Bolshevik rule upon the Russian people. For example, American Consul at Omsk, Thomson, reported on April 6 that the Omsk Soviet had dispatched about 100 armed Internationalists to Cheliabinsk to quell an uprising. A number of similar interventions took place in Russia at that time.

Another example of the role of the Internationalists was the pressure and terror these put upon the Russians on behalf of the Bolsheviks. American Consul at Irkutsk, MacGowan, reported on April 12 that in Tomsk the armed prisoners of war, mainly Hungarians acting as Red Guards, had carried out arrests, seizures and requisitions of property. On March 24 the local Soviet demanded contribution of 5 million rubles from the local businessmen. Those refusing to pay were arrested by the Internationalists and held as hostages. The Soviet then increased the levy to 9 million, and enforced the collection through the Internationalists before releasing the hostages. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75. These files are full of reports on similar incidents.

22. The text of this radiogram is cited in a cable of M.

NOTES

Summers, American Consul in Moscow, to the Secretary of State, Washington, dispatched on April 22, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1672.

23. *Loc. cit.*

24. J. Degras (Ed.), *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, 1917-1924* (London: 1951), pp. 70-3.

25. For Trotsky's disarmament order see Klante, *op. cit.*, p. 100; also 320.

26. Ulianov, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

27. For all the above cited source material see *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, R.G. 120; Organization Records; Military Intelligence; Military Attaches. Russia: Box No. 75. The material can be found in the following files: (1) M.I., M.A., Russia; Enemy P.W.; (2) M.I., M.A.; Russia; Cables to and from Captain Prince in Moscow; (3) M.I., M.A., Russia; Letters from Captain Riggs to Colonel Ruggles; (4) M.I., M.A., Russia; Cipher and Telegrams to and from Officers at Moscow; (5) M.I., M.A., Russia; from the Consulate General Moscow.

For other figures see N.N. Golovin, *Rossiiskaia kontr-revoliutsia v 1917-1918 gg.* (Imprime en Estonie, 1937), Vol. III, pp. 116 and 51.

28. Brandstrom, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

29. Ulianov, *op. cit.*, p. 109. Other estimates of the number of prisoners of war in the Red Army considerably vary. Klante came up with a figure of 15,000 men; see Klante, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

L. Fischer dismissed altogether a notion that any prisoners of war had joined the Red Army; see his *The Soviets in World Affairs*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 104-5. Fischer even invoked Masaryk's testimony to the effect that during his travel through Siberia, on his way to Japan, Masaryk had not seen a single armed prisoner of war. Masaryk, however, left Moscow on March 7, and the campaign of the Bureau reached Siberia in middle of April. For Masaryk's testimony see the *National Archives*, Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1579.

The most reliable estimates would be those of Brandstrom and Ulianov. Brandstrom had access to the records of the

Prisoners of War Administration in Russia and Siberia, and Ulianov drew upon the documents of the Bureau of Prisoners of War. The latter source should be particularly authoritative.

Ulianov's estimate that in the fall of 1918 some 50,000 Internationalists served in the Bolshevik armed forces is corroborated by Iakovlev, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

However, a new light on the problem is thrown by a study *Internatsionalisty v boiakh za vlast sovetov* (*op. cit.*), p. 89. This source maintains that the 50,000 Internationalists represented only those who served in purely International Regiments of the Red Army. To this number, states the source, must be added those prisoners of war who served in the partisan forces and regular units of the Red Army, which would increase the total considerably, *op. cit.*, p. 137. The proportion of the Hungarians was very high, between 60 to 70 per cent (*Ibid.*, p. 138).

30. Zharov, *op. cit.*, p. 51. Kladt and Kondratiev confirmed the figure for the Hungarians (*op. cit.*), p. 4. It seems that Zharov's estimate is most comprehensive and included the prisoners of war serving in regular Red Army units, partisan and party irregular formations, and battalions consisting purely of Internationalists.

31. *Internatsionalisty v boiakh za vlast sovetov*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

32. Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile*, p. 69.

33. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 84.

34. Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile*, p. 72.

35. Report of Major Riggs entitled the *Enemy Prisoners of War in Russia*, July 9, 1918, in footnote 27.

36. R. Gajda, *Moje pameti* (Praha: 1924), *passim*.

37. An entry in the Diary of the German Military Attache in Moscow on June 23, 1918, in Bothmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-4. See also a report entitled *German Activity in Russia*, prepared by Captain Eugene Prince from the American Military Mission in Moscow on June 28, 1918, in *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, R.G. 120, Organization Records, Military Intelligence. Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

33. Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile*, p. 76.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

40. Report of Riggs in footnote 27.

41. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I,

R.G. 120, Organization Records; Military Intelligence; Military Attaches, Russia, Box No. 75.

42. A gross average arrived at by dividing the total number of volunteers who joined the Bolsheviks (according to Brandstrom 90,000), by the number of prisoners of war (976,000) who were on the territory of Russia and Siberia at the beginning of the repatriation campaign (i.e., the grand total given by Golovin less the Dvinsk, Minsk, Kiev, Caucasus and Odessa Districts), comes to 9.4 per cent.

This gross average is, however, misleading in estimating the actual effectiveness of the Bolsheviks in inducing foreign nationals to join the Red Army. It seriously underplays the high results achieved in the areas of great concentration of the Bolshevik efforts and overplays the negligible results achieved in peripheral areas. An estimate made by Kennan, that only 5.6 per cent of the total number of prisoners of war had joined the Bolsheviks, suffers from this error. See Kennan, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 73. Kennan disregards special conditions obtaining in peripheral areas, like the dissolution of camps in the Ukraine and western and southern Russia. He measures the total number of prisoners of war (1.6 million) obtained in the whole Russian Empire at the end of 1917, by the total number (90,000) of volunteers who joined the Red forces.

43. The activities of the anti-Bolshevik groups in Omsk, and all major cities of Western Siberia, are described by V. Vegman in his article entitled "Sibirskie kontr-revolutsionnye organizatsii v 1918 g.", published in *Sibirskie Ogni* (Novonikolaievsk) No. I, January-February 1928, pp. 135-46.

44. Telegram of the British Ambassador at Tokyo of April 3, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1569.

This Japanese intelligence report is corroborated by observations of American Consul at Irkutsk, MacGowan, who daily inspected the local railway station through which all traffic to and from the Far East passed. See his reports on movement of trains with armed Internationalists from Omsk towards Manchuria of March 27, April 3, and April 4, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, R.G. 120, Organization Records; Military Intelligence; Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

45. Major Drysdale was recalled from the Philippines and stationed in Peking to undertake intelligence work among the prisoners in Siberia. He made several trips across Siberia. See his reports in *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File. The reports appear under the following Document Numbers: 861.00/1290 (Report dated on April 1, 1918); 861.00/1870 (Reports dated on March 19, April 10, and April 24, 1918).

The estimates regarding the Bolshevik troops in Siberia given by Drysdale substantially tally with the estimates of the French Military Attache in Peking, Colonel Pichon, who himself made several trips over Siberia. The reports, however, differ fundamentally in the assessment of the possibility of seizure of Siberia by the prisoners of war, and in recommending what the Allies should do to prevent such a development.

For one report of Pichon see a telegram from the British Ambassador at Peking to London of March 13, 1918, in *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1432. A 30-page report prepared by Pichon on April 14, 1918, and given by the French Military Mission in Peking to the Americans, and sent from Tokyo to the Department of State on June 5, 1918, is filed under the Document Number 861.00/2220. See also a report of Colonel M. Speschnoff, of April 9, 1918. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1331½.

46. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1870.

47. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 83.

48. Kakurin. *op. cit.*, p. 207.

49. Vegman estimated that all these named cities of Western Siberia had some 7,000 armed counter-revolutionaries at the end of May, and that the Soviet forces opposing them amounted to a fraction of that number. This would mean that the Bolsheviks commanded a support of less than 7,000 troops on the territory of the whole Western Siberia. Vegman, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9.

50. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1280.

51. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Record Group 120, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

52. *Trotsky Archive* (Harvard University), Document No. 13.

Though the Irkutsk Soviet started to arm the prisoners *en masse* only on April 5, the sympathizers with the Bolsheviks in the camps had armed themselves much earlier. According to a statement made to Captain Pichon by a Rumanian officer who visited Omsk and Irkutsk, the Third Re-Union Conference, held in Irkutsk in middle of March had resolved that all members of the Clubs of Internationalists should arm themselves. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2440.

53. *Trotsky Archive* (Harvard University), Documents No. 14 and 15.

54. *Ibid.*, Document No. 12.

55. Telegram of the British Consul at Kharbin to the Foreign Office of March 18, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1432½.

56. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1870.

57. Kakurin, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

58. Report of MacGowan of April 1, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, R.G. 120, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

59. *Loc. cit.*

60. *Loc. cit.*

61. *The National Archives* (Washington), The Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2178. Summary No. 10 of the Intelligence Reports; Affairs Siberia, ending June 14, 1918. Prepared by the British General Staff (M.I.O.), The War Office. This figure seems corroborated by a report of the Siberian Military Commissariat issued on May 21, 1918, which listed 8,450 Red troops in the Amur basin on May 18. Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

62. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2178.

63. Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 183. For the report of the American military personnel cited above see *The National Archives* (Washington), Record Group 45 W 6, *Siberia*, Box 614 C.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

65. Zharov states that in June 1918, in the Tomsk Gubernia, some 14 per cent of prisoners of war joined the Red forces, and in Yenisey Gubernia 12 per cent; Zharov, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

66. American Assistant Military Attache in Moscow, Major Riggs, estimated that there were 15-20,000 armed prisoners of war in the Bolshevik forces in all Siberia in May: this was about 12-16 per cent of the total number of inmates of all Siberian camps. About 50 per cent of the armed prisoners were Hungarians. See his report of July 9, 1918, entitled *The Enemy Prisoners of War in Russia. The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records; Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

67. V.M. Fic, *The Czechoslovak Legion and the Allied Grand Strategy: The Problem of the Reopening of the Eastern Front in 1918* (unpublished manuscript), pp. 252-4.

68. Zeman Z.A.B., *Germany and the Revolution in Russia 1915-1918: Documents from Archives of German Foreign Ministry*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, Document No. 94-5.

The German Government's policy of weakening Russia through revolutionary propaganda and promotion of fissures among her nationalities was based upon an extraordinary memorandum prepared by an exiled Russian revolutionary Dr. Helphand, alias Dr. Parvus, and submitted to the German Foreign Office on March 9, 1915. For full text see *Ibid.*, pp. 140-152.

The question of German aid to the Bolsheviks was subject of investigation by the American Government, and a document was published corroborating evidence concerning the German-Bolshevik co-operation mentioned in Kuhlmann's letter. The publication is entitled *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy. The Information Series, No. 20, October 1918*. Committee on the Public Information, George Greel, Chairman (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1913). The documents brought to light in this publication were evaluated by G.F. Kennan in his article entitled "The Sisson Documents", published in the *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, June, 1955, pp. 130-154. See also E. Sisson's own account in his book

One Hundred Red Days: A Personal Chronicle of the Bolshevik Revolution (Yale University Press, New Haven 1931).

For German financing of the revolutionary activities of the Bolsheviks see Z.A.B. Zeman and W.B. Scharlau, *The Merchant of Revolution: The Life of Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus), 1867-1924* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), particularly pp. 206-34. Also Alfred E. Senn, "The Myth of German Money During the First World War", *Soviet Studies*, Glasgow; Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1976, pp. 83-90. Also Alfred Erich Senn, "New Documents on Lenin's Departure from Switzerland, 1917", *International Review of Social History*, Amsterdam, Vol. 19, 1974, pp. 245-53. Also F.L. Carsten, "Was Lenin A German Agent?", *Problems of Communism*, Washington, Vol. VIII, No. 1, January-February 1959, pp. 44-8.

The whole question of Germany financing Lenin and the Bolshevik Party was reopened by Solzhenitsyn A.I., publishing his *Lenin in Zurich* (New York), 1976, and the following studies: Maurice Friedberg, "Solzhenitsyn's and Other Literary Lenins", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Ottawa, Vol. XIX, No. 2, June 1977, pp. 123-37; Alfred G. Meyer, "On the Tracks of the Arch-Fiend", *Ibid.*, pp. 138-52; Alfred Erich Senn, "Solzhenitsyn and the Historical Lenin", *Ibid.*, pp. 153-60.

69. Zeman, *op. cit.*, Document No. 126, pp. 128-9.

70. *Ibid.*, Document No. 131, p. 130.

71. *Ibid.*, Document No. 133, pp. 132-3.

72. *Ibid.*, Document No. 135, p. 137.

73. Kennan G.F., *Russia Leaves the War*, p. 456.

74. Zeman Z.A.B., *op. cit.*, Document No. 99, pp. 98-9.

75. *Loc. cit.*

76. The Germans and the Bolsheviks were deadlocked over the exchange of their prisoners of war. While Germany had in Russia only some 140,000 men, there were about 1.5 million Russian prisoners of war in Germany. These were an important asset in performing certain difficult labour task. This is why Germany during the negotiations proposed an exchange head per head, while the Bolsheviks demanded the exchange of the entire number. See Bothmer K., *Mit Graf Mirbach in Moskau* (Tübingen 1922), p. 9 and p. 36.

77. Cable of Riggs from Moscow to Ruggles in Vologda on

April 29, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

78. *Ibid.*

79. Kennan G.F., *The Decision to Intervene*, p. 74.

80. Kennan G.F., *Russia Leaves the War*, p. 283.

81. *The National Archives* (Washington), The Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1280.

82. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1432½.

83. *Ibid.*, World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

84. Zeman, *op. cit.*, Document No. 124, pp. 124-5.

85. The picture of German nationals in the Bolshevik armies is usually oversimplified, and generalizations are made to the effect that it was wholly unconceivable to expect the Internationalists to promote German interests in Russia. This assumption would be correct, provided that all those who joined the Red formations were convinced revolutionaries, with an unshakeable Leninist outlook. In reality, however, it was not so.

We have seen that several groups of German nationals featured in the Red forces. The most numerous were those volunteers who had joined the Bolsheviks on their own accord: either for political convictions, or just to gain advantages, food and money. The latter category was by no means a small one.

Another group included those men, not necessarily selected from prisoners, which the German Government had officially offered to the Bolsheviks as instructors and specialists.

The men of the third group had, perhaps, been planted into the Red Army by agents of the German General Staff and paraded as most fanatic Internationalists.

It is reasonable to expect that the first group would not promote German interests in Russia. Not so, however, the second and the third groups. But, apparently, not everything was well even with the first group. As will be seen soon, the Bolsheviks took the Czechs into confidence and told them on May 23, 1918 that the Germans and the Hungarians in the Red Army were mostly nationalists who paraded as revolutionaries and most devoted friends of the Bolsheviks, and who under this cloak exploited the trust placed in them by the

Bolsheviks in order to make inroads into the defence establishments of the Soviet Government. They were planning an anti-Soviet *coup*, and the Bolsheviks would appreciate assistance from the Czechs. See also *infra*, pp. 177-83.

Two interpretations appear probable to explain this alarming, and for the Czechs certainly not surprising, development. It would seem that those men who had originally joined the Red Army for monetary and other advantages, and they were numerous, came under the spell of men from the second and third groups who during May made extensive inroads into the Red Army organization. Or, perhaps, that the infiltrators of the third group were so numerous as to pose, on their own strength, a real threat to the Soviet regime. No dependable facts and figures are available on this important topic.

86. The State Secretary was alarmed by the prospects that the peace treaty might not be ratified, and that the entire endeavour of the German diplomacy to immobilise Russia would be frustrated. He cabled to the Foreign Ministry from Bucharest on March 11, 1918 that the situation was so uncertain that he would recommend moderation in evaluating the advantages Germany would be able to derive from the Brest Treaty. He said, "one could probably say that the Eastern sky was beginning to lighten, but it would be perhaps better not, as yet, to assume that the transition from a war on two fronts to a war on a single front is definitely assured." Zeman Z.A.B., *op. cit.*, Document No. 119, p. 119.

87. As will be recalled, the British Intelligence report of June 14, 1918 dealing with the Siberian situation states that the tunnels on the railway south of Lake Baikal had been mined by enemy prisoners doubtless acting with the connivance, if not active assistance, of the Bolshevik authorities. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2178. A Summary of Intelligence No. 10, as of June 14, 1918.

88. Chicherin told to an Italian General sometime before May 27, 1918 that "the Soviet Government would not accept, or accede, to an Allied intervention unless actually attacked by Germany, because the Germans would immediately be on their backs and the Bolsheviks would go out of existence in the struggle . . ." Riggs' cable from Moscow of May 28, 1918.

reporting to Ruggles in Vologda upon a meeting of the Allied Military Representatives, held in Moscow on May 27, 1918. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

89. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 260. Gajda's swift operations in Baikal region, which with a handful of his men secured all tunnels undamaged but one, won admiration particularly from the British military experts who estimated that were the tunnels blown-up it would have taken at least two years to restore the railway connection between Vladivostok and Central Russia. This threat was casting its shadow over the Allied plans of sending an expeditionary force to Russia from their very inception; it was one of the "ifs" of the whole grand scheme.

90. These rumours were not entirely without foundation. American Consul at Samara, Nielson, reported on March 26, 1918 that an Attorney, who had just arrived from Kokhand in Turkestan, reported that there were scores of cars loaded with cotton on the railway between Tashkent and Orenburg. It was no secret in Tashkent that if these cars reached Moscow they would be shipped to Germany. A German prisoner of war, named Schmidt, was the chief agent in making arrangements for the shipment of purchased and confiscated cotton to Germany. Nielson further states that this information was corroborated by a letter which P.B. Anderson, Chief of American YMCA in Russia, was carrying from American Consul at Irkutsk, E.L. Harris, to the Consul General in Moscow. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

American Consul MacGowan at Omsk reported on April 1, 1918 that ". . . prisoners I have seen appeared convinced Bolsheviks, and the influence of German agents is not manifest. German agents are busy in western Siberia, and in Central Asia, trying contracts for the interchange of grain, butter, fats, wool, hides, skins, furs, flax, hemp and cotton, for agricultural machinery and other produce. Conservative military men and businessmen declare that Germans certainly will get these supplies unless there is armed intervention . . ." *Ibid.*

Kennan takes a very strong exception to information

obtained from anti-Bolshevik sources like the above one, and considers them wholly unreliable and responsible for gross distortions of the Siberian picture which then found their way into the reports of the Allied representatives to their Governments. "The existence of these prisoners along the Trans-Siberian railroad was a source of concern to the western Allied circles from the very beginning. This apprehension was ably and successfully exploited by the anti-Bolshevik elements in Siberia, who filled the ears of the Allied representatives with lurid tales of the arming of the prisoners by the Bolsheviks, and pictured a Siberia effectively taken over by the Germans through this device." Kennan G.F., *Russia Leaves the War*, p. 284.

True, most of the reports received from these sources overstated their conclusions, but there is no reason to doubt the validity of the factual part of these reports. In fact, most of the reports of American Consuls in Russia and Siberia concerning prisoners of war were based upon their own personal observations at the railway stations, prisoners camps, etc. And these men were astute observers as, for example, a perusal of MacGowan's cables from Irkutsk testify.

An important document reporting upon various activities of German agents not only in Siberia, but also in Asia, was prepared by Colonel Pichon. This French Intelligence Officer collected every bit of evidence, and also of rumour, concerning the activities of German operators in these parts of the world. The report is divided into the following sections: (A) The Austro-Hungarian and German Prisoners in Siberia; (B) The Bolsheviks are Co-operating with the Germans; (C) German Plans in Asia; (D) German Policy in China. See Report No. 7, of May 23, 1918, prepared by Commandant Pichon, *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2440.

91. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1345.

92. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1280. While reports of Captain Riggs concerning prisoners limited themselves strictly to military intelligence aspects, i.e., only facts and figures, reports of Major Drysdale, in addition to their factual side, attempted to answer the questions of whether these prisoners were posing a threat to the Allied interests, in which way, what was its magnitude, and how to counteract it.

93. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1711.

94. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1870, and 861.00/1711.

95. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1870.

96. *Loc. cit.*

97. *Ibid.*, World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75 (Italics added).

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Loc. cit.* (Italics added).

100. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2220.

101. For full report of Hicks and Webster, dated April 26, 1918, see Cumming C.K., & Pettit W.W., Edit., *op. cit.*, pp. 165-187. At the time the report was submitted the situation in Siberia was vastly different.

102. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1870.

103. The first report upon the findings of Webster and Hicks was received in Washington on April 4 at 6.59 A.M. It was a cable from Ambassador Francis from Vologda, dispatched on 2 April. Francis stated that "... Webster reports only 1,200 prisoners of war armed and they expatriated themselves and took oath of allegiance to Russian Federal Republic..." *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. II, p. 96.

Meanwhile, Francis compared the reports on the prisoners received from the Consuls in Siberia, and on April 4 cabled his doubts: "... Robins forwarded me daily reports from Webster in Irkutsk... Webster-Hicks' reports give different impression about conditions... in Siberia from those of Consuls..." *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7. This cable was received in Washington on April 6 at 8.59 P.M.

The Secretary of State was anxious to know more about Webster's findings, and on April 8 cabled to Francis to forward the full details. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

The Allied representatives in Siberia, who had first hand knowledge of the situation, did not think much about Hicks and Webster Mission and about their objectivity. For example, MacGowan reports from Irkutsk on April 12 that at the time these two men were in Irkutsk he had informed them about the role the Hungarian armed prisoners were playing in the extortion of 9 million rubles from the local businessmen in Tomsk.

Then he adds: "I informed Webster of prominence of the proletarians in Tomsk in local affairs, and earnestly recommended him to make a halt there. Webster and Hicks informed the local Bolsheviki about the matter, and were disposed in this, as in other matters, to accept Bolshevik assurances that it was nothing." *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

104. For both cables see *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1432½.

105. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1432½.

106. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1432½.

107. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1432½.

108. It will be recalled that Irkutsk was not really "occupied" by prisoners of war, as Lansing alleges. Kennan rightly points out that this was an example of one of many distortions of the situation concerning prisoners in Siberia, which greatly contributed to the confusion about the whole matter. Kennan G.F., *The Decision to Intervene*, p. 392.

109. Curiously enough, it were precisely these reasons which President Wilson later gave as a justification for the entry of the American-Japanese expeditionary forces into Siberia in August. His declared objectives were to help the Czechoslovaks, and to assist the Russian people to organise self-government and to set up a new Russian army so that Russia could regain her lost territories. For Wilson's justification see his Aide Memoire of July 17, 1918, and its modified published version of August 3, 1918, in *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. II, pp. 287-90 and *Ibid.*, pp. 328-9.

For an excellent and scholarly analysis of the intricate motivations which made President Wilson decide against sending an expeditionary force to Siberia in March, April and May 1918 see Kennan G.F., *The Decision to Intervene* (*op. cit.*), pp. 82-3, 90, 91-2, 94-5, 128-9.

110. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1570.

111. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1413.

112. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/157 (emphasis supplied).

113. Kennan G.F., *Decision to Intervene*, p. 77.

114. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1454.

115. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1420.

116. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1448.

117. *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. II, p. 137.

118. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/1420.

119. *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. II, p. 125.

120. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1870. Report of April 24, 1918.

121. *Loc. cit.*

122. *Loc. cit.*

123. *Loc. cit.*

124. *The National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2165½ and 861.00/2223.

125. *Ibid.*, Document No. 861.00/2219½A. But it must at once be emphasized that the activization of American policy towards Russia and Siberia, i.e., the decision of President Wilson of July 6, 1918 to dispatch a joint American-Japanese military expedition to Siberia, was not predicated upon the issue of prisoners of war, as has often been maintained. The documents show that the President decided to send the American and Japanese troops to Siberia "on sentimental grounds and because of the effect upon the friendly Slavs everywhere would be subject to criticism if it (the American Government, Ed.) did not make this effort and would doubtless be held responsible if they (the Czechoslovaks, Ed.) were defeated by lack of such effort . . ." The aim of the expedition was to "guard the line of communication of the Czechoslovaks proceeding towards Irkutsk" in order to assist them in forming a junction with other Czech troops operating west of Irkutsk. For the decision of July 6, 1918 see *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. II, pp. 262-63.

126. Zeman Z.A.B. (*op. cit.*), Document No. 122, pp. 123.

127. The Counsellor of German Legation in Moscow, Riezler, in a post script to his letter of June 4, 1918 to Minister Bergen, stated that "We might nevertheless have another six to eight weeks in which to consider whether we can risk a state of chaos inclined towards the Entente, from which we should be

excluded economically, or whether, for the sake of the natural resources, etc., we shall have to decide to set up a bourgeois order with which we can reach agreement." *Ibid.*, Document No. 132, p. 130.

128. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 186.

The problem of Counsellor Riezler from German Legation in Moscow to the effect that Berlin had between six and eight weeks to decide the question of whether to strike against the Bolsheviks or not was solved by the outbreak of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict. By middle of June the Czechs had won a number of important victories and there was a real possibility that as a result the Soviet regime would fall, and that it would be succeeded by a pro-Allied regime. To preclude such a development Germany was ready to strike at the Bolsheviks in order to install in power a pro-German regime before the fall of the Bolsheviks and the formation of a pro-Allied government; reports that Berlin would seize Moscow on June 21 were current in middle of June. See Kennan G. F., *The Decision to Intervene*, pp. 314-15. The armed groups of German prisoners, together with 10,000 regular troops, were to overthrow the Bolshevik regime:

"... Have heard from two sources that a German Colonel in uniform had been recently met (by) a combination group in Moscow and promised that 10,000 Germans with German divisions organized from prisoners of war would overturn Bolshevik Government in one week if combination group would favour German Alliance and compel Allied forces and Allied representatives to leave Russia, and that combination group considering proposition and disposed to act..." *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. I, pp. 563-4. Francis to Washington on June 19, 1918.

In summer of 1918 Berlin was exploring an idea of organizing a Russian Volunteer Army, composed of Russians, against the Bolsheviks and the Allies, and on October 10 an agreement was signed with the Monarchists to that effect in Pskov. Other plans developed later visualized organizing Russian prisoners of war in Germany into armed formation and then use against the Bolsheviks in the Baltic areas. See R. C. Williams,

"Russian War Prisoners and Soviet-German Relations: 1918-1921", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol IX, No. 2, 1967, pp. 271-95.

129. The concentration of the Bolshevik forces, both of the Red Army and the Battalions of Internationalists, closely followed Lenin's declaration of April 24, 1918 to the effect that the civil war in Russia, as he put it, "for all practical purposes", was over. All major adversaries had either been defeated, or their military power broken. This then enabled Trotsky to deploy against the Czechs the troops recalled from various fronts of the civil war as soon as the decision to force the Czechs into submission by arms was reached in middle of May. For Lenin's pronouncement see his speech of April 24, as reported from Moscow to Washington on April 26, in the *National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/1667.

130. Bothmer K., *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

131. *The National Archives* (Washington), World War I, Organization Records, Military Intelligence, Military Attaches, Russia, Box 75.

132. Kennan G.F., *Russia Leaves the War*, pp. 460-84.

133. The German military power casting its shadow over the defenceless country convinced the Czechs in Russia that Germany was in a position to put a pressure upon the Soviet Government to extract any concession. *Ceskoslovensky dennik* of May 14, 1918, recorded on that day the 42nd protest which had been lodged by the German Government with the Bolsheviks against the violation of the Brest Treaty. It was not entirely unreasonable to suspect that one of such protests might have demanded the disarmament and dissolution of the Army Corps.

134. The debate was opened by a book of Papousek, *Procdoslo k bojum legii se sovety* (Praha 1928). Then came an article of Steidler, entitled "Jaroslav Papousek, Rusko a csl., legie v letech 1914-1918", and published in *Nase revoluce* (Praha 1933), Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 100-105. Papousek's rebuttal was entitled "K otazce: Rusko a ceskoslovenske legie", published in *Nase revoluce* (Praha 1933), Vol. IX, No. 2, pp. 240-244. Then Steidler again came with an article entitled "K

otazce: Rusko a ceskoslovenske legie", in *Nase revoluce* (Praha 1933), Vol. IX, No. 3-4, pp. 469-472.

135. Papousek published full text of a cable of Baron Arz, which had been dispatched from Baden to Vienna on May 28, 1918, and in which the German General Staff requested the Austrian Government also to lodge a formal protest with the Soviet Government against the transfer of the Czech Army Corps to France. This was a clear violation of the Brest Peace Treaty.

The second document is the text of a cable sent by the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin, Prince Hohenlohe to Vienna on May 30, 1918. The cable states that a communication of the German General Staff, requesting the German Foreign Office to protest with the Soviet Government against the transfer of the Czechs and the Poles to France, had been received in the Foreign Office only on the previous day. Until then no definite decisions had been made by the Foreign Office in that matter. As the most appropriate course of action Count Mirbach should be requested to lodge a protest in Moscow, stated the cable.

The third document is also a cable of Prince Hohenlohe to Vienna, dated in Berlin on May 31, 1918. The cable states that the evidence regarding the Czech and Polish troops in Russia is conflicting. While Mirbach reported that the Soviet Government on its own accord had been attempting to disarm the Czechs, the General Staff had different reports about the matter. For the moment Mirbach should be requested to communicate to the Soviet Government an expectation of the German General Staff to the effect that the Czechs would be prevented from being transferred to France. A formal protest would be lodged only if the transportation of the Czechs were resumed. *Nase revoluce* (Praha 1933), Vol. IX, No. 20, pp. 240-244.

For Vienna's policies towards the Legion see Thunig-Nittener G., *op. cit.*, pp. 160-70

136. How the Czech Army Corps featured in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations is touched upon by Wheeler-Bennet, J.W., *Brest-Litovsk, The Forgotten Peace, March 1918* (Macmillan, London 1956), p. 273.

137. *Nase revoluce* (Praha 1933), Vol. IX, No. 2, pp. 240-244.

138. Kennan G.F., *The Decision to Intervene*, p. 293. Kennan cites documents from the German Foreign Office Archives: Berkheim's cables of May 28 and June 4, 1918 from the Grosses Hauptquartier; Kuhlmann's cable to Mirbach of June 1, 1918; Mirbach's cable to the Foreign Office of June 4, 1918; and a Foreign Office Memorandum of June 7, 1918.

CHAPTER IV

1. For full text see Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii* (Praha: Knihovna osvobozeni, 1923), pp. 89-92.

2. The Czech Communist sources exaggerate, beyond all proportions, the influence of the left opposition within the Army Corps. For example, Krizek argues that the preliminary conference was forced upon the unwilling National Council by the left radicals, particularly from the Soviet of the First Division. Krizek, *Penza*, p. 128. In fact, the reverse was true. The Soviet of the First Division adopted in Inzhavino a resolution to the effect that all agitation for the congress must be condemned and the National Council given a free hand to convene it as soon as conditions permitted. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 121-2.

3. The narrative of the proceedings of the conference in Penza is based upon these sources: Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirské armade*, pp. 92-117; *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 114-5; Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 127-30. The account of Zmrhal is a particularly valuable source because he participated in all meetings and drew upon their official minutes. He presided over the congress itself held in Omsk in August 1918.

4. Before the conference opened the Czech Bolsheviks boasted about "having the masses on their side". One delegate, Vasek, elected by the Artillery Brigade, confidently declared that the entire brigade would follow him to join the Red Army; actually, only 6 men deserted with him. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 115.

5. In fact, the National Council decided in Omsk on April

28 that the delegates would be convened for a pre-congress conference to Vladivostok, to start on May 30, to resolve the question where and when the actual congress should be held. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 101.

6. The text of this resolution was drafted at the meeting of the delegates on April 30 after the army radicals, led by Cecek and Rocek, had been defeated on the previous day and submitted to the National Council. For full text see Kudela, *S nasim vojskem na Rusi*, Vol. II, pp. 139-40.

7. J. David worked in the Recruitment Commission of the National Council. He was a member of the Czech Socialist Party and after the war played a prominent part in the development of the new Czechoslovak state. Tortured by the Nazis during the Second World War, after the war he became Speaker of the National Assembly.

F. Polak was former Chairman of a Student Group of the Social Democratic Party at the Law Faculty of Charles University in Prague. In Russia he worked in the editorial office of *Ceskoslovensky dennik*. He lived in New York, and the author owes him thanks for many valuable suggestions in preparing this study. In 1957 Polak published a volume on the Army Corps in Russia entitled *Masarykovy legie v boji proti Sovetum* (New York: Independence Publishing Corporation, 1957).

8. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 114-5. This gathering, as well as that organized on the previous day, was flooded with thousands of leaflets distributed by the Czech Communists which pleaded with the men to remain in Russia. For full text see Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, pp. 544-6.

9. The declaration was signed by Vanicek, Skotak, Synek and Koudelka, and was entitled "Why We Refuse To Go To France"; for full text see *Ibid.*, pp. 113-5. Penza became a scene of paper war between the Czechs from the Red Army and the Legion at the beginning of May. On May 6 the Czech Communists again flooded the trains with another declaration. See Krizek, *Penza*, pp. 129-30.

10. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, p. 151.

11. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

12. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 96.

13. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
14. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 97.
15. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 98.
16. Vavra, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
19. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 144.
20. Patejdl, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-5.
21. A letter of Markovic of May 15 from Moscow to the National Council in Omsk in *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 147-8. Also a report of Janik to the Provisional Executive Committee, which later replaced the National Council, delivered on May 26 in Cheliabinsk in *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50. Also Patejdl, *Sibirska anabase*, pp. 24-5.
22. There was no event more effectively used by the Bolsheviks to immobilize the Allies, as well as the Czechs, than the threat of the Anglo-Japanese landing. The Japanese set ashore about 500 men on April 5 to protect the lives and property of Japanese citizens in the city, as Admiral Koto put it, after three Japanese businessmen had been killed on the previous day. The British put ashore 50 men to guard their Consular Office. The danger of "the impending Japanese intervention" was amplified by the Bolsheviks beyond all proportions. Though certain military circles in Japan had a design upon Siberia, a powerful group of liberal statesmen kept them in check. And when finally this military group won over the liberals, the United States restrained the hand of Japan. See Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918*; Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*; his second volume *The Decision to Intervene*.
23. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 147-8.
24. *Loc. cit.*
25. The text of this statement was communicated by the French Military Attache. General Lavergne, to Paris on May 15; we, have, however, only its paraphrased version given in his cable to Paris of June 1 under point 8. For full text of the cable of June 1 see Benes, *Svetova valka*, Vol. II, pp. 248-9. No other text is available. The inability of the British to provide immediately the needed tonnage for the Czechs played an important role in shaping the policies of the Soviet Government towards the Czechs. Lockhart negotiated this problem

with Trotsky several times. See a memorandum of Trotsky given to a representative of the Czechs, Vaclav Neubert, on May 31, 1918, in Trotsky's book, *Kak vooruzhalas revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1923), Vol. I, pp. 212-5.

26. Patejdl, *Sibirska anabase*, pp. 24-5.

27. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 163.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-5.

29. A letter of Lenfeld from Penza to Omsk of May 20, 1918, in *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 127-8.

30. *Loc. cit.*

31. Zmrhal, *Armada ducha druhe mile*, p. 39.

32. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, p. 373; also Krizek, *Penza*, p. 132. Krizek considers this incident as the beginning of a series of measures undertaken by the Czechs to depose the Soviet Government.

33. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 121.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

35. Krizek, *Penza*, p. 147-8. Soviet historians attributed a sinister role to Gajda's *Plan of Action* and his *Order No. 38/1*, alleging that these actually touched-off the conflict. These are taken as documentary evidence of "the aggressive designs" of the Czechs against the Soviet Government. P. S. Parfenov, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Sibiri 1918-1920 gg.* (Moskva: 1924), pp. 19-20; also V. Maksakov and A. Turunov, *Kronika grazhdanskoi voiny v Sibiri 1917-1918 gg.* (Moskva: 1926), p. 65.

Curiously enough, this argument has found its way into a work of J.A. White, entitled *The Siberian Intervention* (Princeton University Press: 1950), p. 250. See another work of Parfenov, entitled *Grazhdanskaia voina v Sibiri 1918, 1919, 1920 gg.* (Kharbin: 1921), pp. 29-32.

36. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 125.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-4.

39. *Loc. cit.*

40. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 140.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

44. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, p. 117.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

46. *Loc. cit.*

CHAPTER V

1. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 99-100.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-4.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-8; also Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, p. 67.

4. See also the record prepared by the Commander of Third Regiment, Lieutenant Cila, in *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 154-8. Investigation of the colleagues of the lynched man, to ascertain what motives prompted him to throw a piece of iron at the Czechs, revealed that he had told several times to his friends that the killing of at least one Czech, before departing from Cheliabinsk, was his most cherished ambition. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

6. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, p. 152.

7. Letter of Glos of May 20, 1918, reporting on this visit. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 165-6.

8. Bunyan, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

9. Concentration of the Internationalists from the imbirsk region is described by Valchar and Forst, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-52.

10. Document No. 7.

11. The role which the Cheliabinsk incident played in the origin of the conflict between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks is variously interpreted. Soviet historians generally treat the incident as a signal for the armed uprising of the Czech troops, which they consider as a conspiracy of the Allies, the Whites, and the Czechs; the incident was a rehearsal for future military operations. For example, see F.G. Popov, *Chekho-Slovatskii miatezh i samarskaia uchredilka* (Samara: 1932), pp. 23-41.

The Czech Communist writers followed this line of argument for years until J. Krizek took a more independent and objective position by describing it as one incident, in the long line of provocations and armed demonstrations, which irritated

the Bolsheviks. He attaches no special role to the incident. See *Penza*, pp. 149-50.

12. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 167. In the same cable, dispatched at 13.06 a.m., Maxa informed his colleagues: "Today the Commissariat of Transportation will telegraph to Voronezh, Samara and Yekaterinburg the following: upon orders of the Commissariat of War arrangements must be made whereby the Czechoslovak trains should be transferred from the line Rtichevo-Cheliabinsk to the Perm line; two trains a day . . ." The order, however, was never issued.

13. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 167-9; also 215. Markovic, who somehow escaped the hand of the *Cheka* and remained free, reported on May 21 at 6 p.m. that in the morning he called upon the British, French and Serbian Military Missions in Moscow and informed them about the arrest of Maxa, Cermak and others. A spokesman for the British Mission, probably Lockhart, who then talked to Karakhan, informed Markovic that his colleagues had been arrested because of the Cheliabinsk incident which the Bolsheviks considered an anti-government uprising. Markovic was assured that the matter was in the hands of the Allies who would continue intervening with the Soviet authorities also the next day; but the Czechs, in the meantime, must refrain from taking any step with the government, could not participate in Allied-Bolshevik talks and must wait for their result. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-8.

14. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 168.

15. Maxa believed, as late as June 3, 1918, that the Allies would make the Soviet Government honour the agreement of May 15. On that day, the Bolsheviks dropped thousands of leaflets, signed by Maxa, from an airplane over the Czech troops. Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, p. 99.

16. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 169.

17. From a private archive cited by Kratochvil, *Cesta revoluce*, pp. 105-6.

18. For Markovic's report on Maxa's interview with Trotsky see *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 147-8.

19. A.S. Kalina, author of *Krvi a zelezem*, declared this to the writer at Harvard University on May 15, 1958.

20. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 182.

21. The Allies really worked hard to provide the needed

tonnage for the transfer of the Army Corps from Russia. The first report concerning the availability of tonnage in Vladivostok is of June 11. On that day the French Military Attache in London cabled to Paris that the British War Ministry had already directed two ships from Hong Kong to Vladivostok to take aboard 5,000 Czechs for transport to Vancouver. See Benes, *Svetova valka*, Vol. III, p. 649. In view of the contemplated transfer of 100 American divisions to France the tonnage was a real problem.

Kalina made extensive research into the problem of tonnage and came to the conclusion that the tonnage was on hand, but that the Allies did not avail themselves of it because they secretly planned to retain the Czechs in Russia in spite of their public promises to transfer them to France. Kalina based himself upon the American-Japanese agreement of April 26, 1918, which provided the United States with 23 cargo ships. Until the end of May 12 ships left Japan for the United States and none took a single Czech waiting in Vladivostok. The only troops transported from Vladivostok at that time were 339 Belgian, 350 Italian, 4,600 Serbian troops and 300 Serbian officers. Kalina maintains that it was the United States which worked for the retention of the Czechs in Siberia. Kalina even feels that this deliberately denied tonnage to the Czechs was the real cause of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict. According to Kalina, Trotsky was well aware that the Allies played a game with him, promising tonnage but secretly worked for the retention of the Czechs in Russia; he, therefore, decided to dissolve the Army Corps in order to deprive the Allies of the instrument which could further their aims in Russia. Kalina, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-63.

This explanation is not borne out by the facts relating to the origin of the Trotsky-Aralov-Muna scheme.

22. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 163-4.

23. *Loc. cit.*

24. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, pp. 133-5.

25. *Loc. cit.*

26. *Loc. cit.*

27. It is possible that this cable was never delivered to Noulens at Vologda and was confiscated by Trotsky. It was

essential for the success of Trotsky's plan to keep the French and Maxa isolated from the congress at Cheliabinsk.

28. A letter of Zavada to Maxa of May 22, in *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 170.

29. *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, pp. 170-1; also Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, pp. 136-7.

30. The Cheliabinsk Soviet was under a considerable pressure of the Hungarian Internationalists, who objected to its co-operation with the Czechs. They even suggested that if it were unavoidable to release the trains from Cheliabinsk, these should be halted somewhere beyond Cheliabinsk and ambushed. Kratochvil, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

31. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, pp. 140-1; also Bunyan and Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918, Documents and Materials*, p. 90.

32. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, pp. 140-1.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

34. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, p. 141. As told to Zmrhal by Cermak in 1919.

35. Hanus recorded that Major Guinet had told him on June 2, 1918 that "the peaceful settlement of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict is a matter of honour for the French Government". *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 356.

36. A letter of Kudela to Gajda on May 24, 1918, in *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 179.

37. *Loc. cit.*

38. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, pp. 184, 189, and 190; also *Za svobodu*, Vol. III, p. 179; also Steidler, *Nase vystoupeni v Rusku*, p. 40.

39. L. Germanov, "K istorii Chekho-Slovatskovo nastuplenia i sverzhenia Sovetskoi vlasti v Sibiri", in *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* (1922), No. 4, pp. 16-23.

40. Kudela, General Shokhorov and their staff trains were stopped by the Bolsheviks at Petropavlovsk on May 25 and not permitted to continue to Cheliabinsk, though Major Guinet was allowed to resume his journey. The situation so much changed within a day. Zmrhal, *O samospravu a demokracii*, p. 189.

41. Zmrhal, *Vlada Sovetu a Cechoslovaci*, p. 19.

CHAPTER VI

1. Germanov L., *op. cit.*, pp. 16-23.
2. The deteriorating position of the Soviet regime and the upsurge of anti-Bolshevik organisations in Siberia at the end of May is described by Vegman V., *op. cit.*, pp. 137-46.
3. Zmrhal K., *Armada ducha druhe mile*, pp. 56-7.
4. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 189-90.
5. Germanov L., *op. cit.*, pp. 16-23.
6. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 192.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-9. Hanus was under instructions of the PEC to be careful and avoid any conflict with the Omsk Bolsheviks as long as possible.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 193. This account clearly establishes that it were the Bolsheviks who fired the first shot.
10. *Loc. cit.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
12. Zmrhal K., *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirske armade*, pp. 155-6.
13. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 186-7.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 194. At Izil-Kul Hanus captured on May 26 Schlichter, Commissar of Supplies of the Central Government. The commissar was accompanied by a detachment of Latvian Guards for personal safety, as was customary for all high ranking Soviet leaders; the Latvians surrendered without fighting.
16. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 194.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 358. Hanus employed a ruse to capture the fortified city of Omsk. He first drew the Bolshevik forces, mostly Internationalists, out of their fortifications and then defeated them at Marianovka, the very scene of his first encounter with the Bolsheviks on May 25. The second defeat of the Bolsheviks at Marianovka on June 6 sealed the fate of Omsk. The Soviet fled, and the Czechs entered the city with no resistance on the next day.
19. For the negotiations in Omsk and the role which Major Guinet played in them see a report of American Consul

Thomson in *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol-II, pp. 248-60. The cable of Guinet is cited by Thomson. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 204-5. Also *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 356, 358-9.

20. Krizek J., *Penza, Slavna bojova tradicë cs. rudoarmejcu*, p. 156.

21. Krizek makes Trotsky responsible for the origin of the Czech-Bolshevik conflict. Trotsky's order of May 23 was a provocation and a treasonable act because Trotsky did not pay any attention to the weak military position of the local Soviets. Writes Krizek:

"The immediate and welcome pretext for the counter-revolutionary elements within the Czech Legion to stage their uprising was Trotsky's cable of May 23. This cable ordered not only complete disarmament of all Czech units but also their dissolution. The Czech officers intercepted this order at the Penza telegraph station. This telegram of Trotsky was an act of clear provocation, similar to his treacherous act at Brest-Litovsk. Trotsky must have known that his contemptuous gesture did not correspond to the armed strength of the Soviets in the Volga region and in Siberia. To anybody who knew the real situation, and Trotsky knew it too well, it was clear that the weak and poorly organized units of the Red Army were in no position forcibly to dissolve the well organized and well armed Army Corps . . . deployed all along the Trans-Siberian line. Under these conditions Trotsky's telegram meant only one thing: it was designed to damage the Soviet power by provoking and accelerating the already inevitable and well in advance prepared counter-revolutionary uprising of the Czech Legion." *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.

Trotsky is still a taboo to the Communist writers. Krizek forgets, however, that Trotsky acted under the instructions of the Soviet Government and that the first order to dissolve the Czech units went out from Moscow under Lenin's name already on May 21. Lenin was also an accomplice to this "plot".

22. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

23. *Loc. cit.*

24. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp 164-7.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

27. For text of these cables see *Ibid.*, pp. 217-8.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20.

30. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 254.

31. Zmrhal K., *Armada ducha druhe mile*, p. 47.

32. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 222.

33. *Loc. cit.*

34. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

35. *Loc. cit.*

36. Steidler F., *Ceskoslovenske hnuti na Rusi*, p. 63.

37. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 224.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

39. Minikin cabled to the Chairman of the Soviet of Kuznieck, Commissar Polozov, on May 27 at 12.10 p.m. that he could not send any troops to Kuznieck to assist him in disarming the Czechs. The troops would be sent as soon as the Czechs in Penza were disarmed. Cabled Minikin: "... Please wait for the result of our efforts here. We hope to solve the Czech problem in a peaceful way . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 228.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

41. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 220.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-8.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-8.

45. Krizek J., *Penza, Slavna bojova tradice cs. rudoarmejcu*, p. 151.

46. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 230.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-1.

50. *Loc. cit.*

51. *Loc. cit.*, Also Krizek J., *Penza, Slavna bojova tradice cs. rudoarmejcu*, p. 157.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

53. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 236-7.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

55. Krizek J., *Penza, Slavna bojova tradice cs. rudoarmejcu*, pp. 161-2.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4.

57. The encounter was described in *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 238-45.

58. Krizek J., *Penza, Slavna bojova tradice es. rudoarmejcu*, p. 161.

59. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 278.

60. *Loc. cit.* First confrontation of Kudela and General Shokhorov with the rebellious PEC took place on June 11 at the meeting of the PEC in Cheliabinsk. At that meeting Kudela had to explain why he had worked, together with Major Guinet, against the PEC in negotiating with the Soviet of Omsk. Kudela defended himself by stating that he had not been informed about the events taking place in Cheliabinsk at that time. True, Gajda had passed through Omsk, said Kudela, but he failed to give a detailed report to General Shokhorov about the decisions of the Military Collegium. Kudela further said that also the PEC was at fault because it failed to send couriers with specific information for the National Council in time. The couriers who had passed through Omsk with messages for the forward units looked with contempt upon the Council and would not even talk to its members. Zmrhal K., *O samospravu a demokracii v sibirské armade*, pp. 184, 189, 190.

61. For full text of Kudela's letter see *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 179.

Kudela was much upset that Gajda decided not to inform Shokhorov and him about the real state of affairs in Cheliabinsk. He was angry that the PEC ignored the National Council, and that the couriers with instructions saw everybody in Omsk but the members of the Council. Wrote Kudela to Gajda in the same letter:

"... One personal remark. The decisions of the Cheliabinsk Congress are being implemented in the most high-handed manner; this is totally unacceptable to me. For example, a courier with instructions for the eastern trains passed through here yesterday. To our amazement he gave the instructions here to the Transport Officer, then to the Commander of each train and, perhaps, to someone else; but the Chief Commander of the Army Corps, and members of the National Council, were left out. Such a treatment will have most unpleasant consequences. I shall demand a full explanation as soon as the situation settled a bit..."

62. *Loc. cit.*

63. Gajda R., *Moje Pameti*, p. 35.

64. From a private archive; cited by Kratochvil J., *op. cit.*, p. 84.

65. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 278-80.

66. From a private archive; cited by Kratochvil J., *op. cit.*, p. 83.

67. Kratochvil, in his book *Cesta revoluce*, attempted to establish that Gajda was chiefly responsible for the outbreak of the fighting between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks. This contention is based upon a link which Kratochvil made between the seizure of Mariinsk by Kadlec on May 25 at 2.15 p.m. and Trotsky's order of 11 p.m. of that day to the effect that all Czech units must be disarmed, dissolved and any troops apprehended with rifles in hand shot. Kratochvil maintains that Trotsky issued that order only after he learnt about the seizure of Mariinsk. The Czechs resorted to violence, and there was no reason for Trotsky further to negotiate. See Kratochvil J., *op. cit.*, p. 78 and ff.

This contention of Kratochvil was inquired into by Steidler, who concluded that there was no link between the seizure of Mariinsk and Trotsky's order in question. First Kadlec controlled the telegraph in Mariinsk and there was no connection to Omsk. Second, later in the afternoon on May 25 the telegraphic connection from Omsk to Cheliabinsk was interrupted due to the fight of Captain Hanus with the Bolsheviks at Marianovka. Had the Bolsheviks in Omsk known about Kadlec's seizure of Mariinsk, this topic would have cropped into their telegraphic conversations with Cheliabinsk, and Yekaterinburg. conducted in the afternoon of May 25 until the line was interrupted. Also the telegraphic exchange of Omsk, Yekaterinburg and Cheliabinsk with Moscow on May 25 and in the hands of the Czechs failed to show any reference to Mariinsk.

Steidler thus concludes that Trotsky's cable was not precipitated by the Mariinsk incident, but rather by the rout of the Omsk Bolsheviks by Hanus at Marianovka. This latter encounter was, however, planned by the Omsk Soviet already on May 24. As Germanov pointed out, the Bolshevik trains had been dispatched from Omsk at 6 in the morning on May 25. The contact with the Czechs was established at Kulomsino around the noon time, and then followed the hot pursuit and the massacre at Marianovka late afternoon. This incident then

was telegraphed by the Omsk Soviet to Moscow via Yekaterinburg and Perm, because the line to Cheliabinsk was controlled by Hanus at Marianovka.

See Steidler F., *Nase vystoupení v Rusku*, pp. 51-2. First public report about the Czech-Bolshevik conflict appeared in *Izvestiia*, No. 107(371), on May 29, 1918.

Captain E. Kadlec wrote a manuscript about his operations at Mariinsk. But for some reasons this never appeared as a book, though its publication was announced. The book was to be entitled "*Mariinsk*".

68. Gajda R., *op. cit.*, p. 35.

69. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 278.

70. Vegman V., *op. cit.*, p. 141. An anti-Bolshevik uprising in all Siberia was planned by the Revolutionary Staff for June 4, 1918. See Consul Poole's cable to Washington from Moscow on June 18, 1918, in *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol-II, pp. 215-6.

71. Gajda R., *op. cit.*, p. 36.

72. Steidler F., *Nase vystoupení v Rusku*, p. 61.

73. Kratochvil censured Gajda on two accounts. First, that he acted against the instructions of the Cheliabinsk Congress. Second, that he made a liaison with the anti-Bolshevik forces in Novonikolaievsk. According to Kratochvil, Gajda should have negotiated with the Bolsheviks in Novonikolaievsk instead of plunging into military operations. His collusion with the local anti-Bolsheviks brought a new element into the Czech-Bolshevik quarrel. See Kratochvil J., *op. cit.*, p. 78 and ff.

Both these contentions are unfounded. See Steidler F., *Nase vystoupení v Rusku*, p. 57.

74. Gajda R., *op. cit.*, p. 36.

75. Steidler F., *Nase vystoupení v Rusku*, p. 61.

76. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 222.

77. Steidler F., *Nase vystoupení v Rusku*, pp. 58-59.

78. *Loc. cit.*

79. Vegman V., *op. cit.*, p. 141.

80. Steidler F., *Nase vystoupení v Rusku*, pp. 62-3.

81. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, p. 248.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-9. A similar ambush was laid at Zlatoust on May 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-16.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-9.

84. For report of Harris see *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol-II, pp. 184-5.
85. For full text of the agreement see *Loc. cit.*
86. *Loc. cit.*
87. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 199-200.
88. *National Archives* (Washington), Department of State, Decimal File, Document No. 861.00/2199.
89. *Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, Vol. II, p. 217.
90. Cables of Harris of June 12 and 26, 1918, *Ibid.*, pp. 268, 205.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 268. Received in Washington on July 9, 1918.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 205. Cable of Harris of June 12, 1918, received in Washington on June 15, 1918.
93. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 195-8.
94. *Loc. cit.*
96. Trotsky L., *Kak voruzhalas revoliutsiia*, Vol-I, pp. 219-23.
97. *Za svobodu*, Vol-III, pp. 195-98.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
99. *Ibid.*, pp. 338-9.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-7.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
102. *Loc. cit.*
103. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-7.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

CHAPTER VII

1. George F. Kennan comes to a different conclusion: "... It is idle to attempt to find in this occurrence (the conflict, Ed.), the reflection of any deliberate conspiracy or of any special duplicity on one side or the other. Neither side was without provocation in the events that led to it, and neither was without blame . . ." Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, p. 164.

2. V.I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* (Moskva: 1950), Vol. XXVII, pp. 1-2.

The article published by the Czech Communists was based upon the documents seized by the Bolsheviks in the office of the

National Council in Moscow on May 11, 1918. The documents consisted of letters of Masaryk from London to the Czech leaders in Russia, and letters exchanged between the National Council and the Allied missions in Russia regarding financial matters. Lenin was right that the Czechs had received from the Allies 15 million rubles. But he failed to mention that the money was a state loan, extended by the French and British Governments to finance the transfer of the Army Corps to France. This was clearly stated in the documents, but conveniently left out by the Czech Communists and Lenin in quoting them.

Another important thing which the Czech Communists forgot to mention in quoting the seized documents was the fact that the financial transactions between the Czechs and Allies in Russia were conducted with full knowledge of the Soviet Government. The funds were released from the Allied deposits in Russian banks only upon the approval of the Soviet Government. There was nothing secret about these transfers; in fact, every transaction was executed upon orders of Soviet authorities to the banks. The purchase of supplies, and the cost of transportation of the Army Corps to Vladivostok, to be paid to the government, were given as reasons for the transfer of funds in the applications of the Allies to the banks.

Lenin's assertion, that the funds had to finance an anti-Bolshevik uprising, and that the Czechs were paid agents of French and British, is wholly unfounded. In fact, the Soviet Government was the chief beneficiary of these loans: it earned foreign exchange. At the time of the outbreak of the conflict the Czechs had about 1.5 million rubles on hand. The rest, 13.5 million, was paid from the Allied reserves to the Bolshevik-controlled banks for supplies and services rendered.

3. Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revoliutsiia*, p. 22.

Trotsky invoked the same documents against the Czechs as Lenin. The only additions are his references to the cable from the Cheliabinsk congress to the French Mission in Vologda and to the collusion of the French with the Czechs in Cheliabinsk. No such cable was sent by the Czechs to Vologda. The two communications of the congress to the French mission were dispatched on May 21 and 23; the latter was addressed also to the Soviet Government.

There was no collusion of the French and the Czechs in Cheliabinsk. Major Guinet arrived in Cheliabinsk on May 26; all major decisions had been taken by the congress already on May 23. And we know that at that time Guinet was the staunchest opponent of military operations of the Czechs and defender of the actions of the Bolsheviks.

4. V. Alexeiev, "Borba s Chekho-slovatskiim miatezhom v Povolzhie", *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1922), No. 4, pp. 45-89; *Borba za Kazan* (Kazan: 1924); Gaia-Gai, *Borba s Chekhoslovakami na srednei Volge* (Moskva: 1930); L. Germanov, "K istorii Chekho-Slovatskovo nastupleniia i sverzhenia Sovetskoi vlasti v Sibiri", *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1922), No. 4, pp. 16-23; A.S. Bubnov, S.S. Kamenev. and R.P. Eideman, Eds., *Grazhdanskaia voina 1918-1921 gg.* (Moskva: 1928); R. Khabas, "K istorii borby s Chekho-Slovatskiim miatezhom", *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia* (Moskva: 1928), No. 5, pp. 55-65; V.I. Lenin, *Armia i Revoliutsiia* (Leningrad: 1923); N. Maksakov and I. Nelidov, *Kronika revoliutsii; god 1917* (Moskva: 1923); V. Maksakov and A. Turunov, *Kronika grazhdanskoi voiny v Sibiri 1917-1928 gg.* (Moskva: 1926); I. Mints and Gorodetsky, Eds., *Dokumenty po istorii grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR* (Moskva: 1940); I.N. Smirnov and I.P. Flerovski, *Borba za Ural i Sibir* (Moskva: 1926); "Chekhoslovatskii miatezh" in *Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia* (Moskva: 1934), Vol. 61, p. 518; *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, Edited by a Commission of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (B.), (Toronto: Francis White Publishers, Ltd., 1939), p. 327.

The arguments of Russian historians were taken over by some Western writers of early period. See P.M. Price, *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution* (London: 1921); E.A. Ross, *The Russian Soviet Republic* (New York: 1923); L. Fischer, *The Soviets in World-Affairs*, Second Edition (Princeton: 1951), Vol. I, pp. 79-139.

5. Only one copy is available of this collection of documents. It is deposited in the *Vojensky Historicky Ustav* in Prague. The collection is the most important single source of material pertaining to the origin of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, its Red Army and their activities in Russia in 1917-9. Krizek made extensive use of it.

6. Price writes in his article:

"... I am informed that Moona's (A. Muna, a Czech Communist leader, Ed.) legal advisers are in possession of documents which should make the trial of international interest . . . After the Czechoslovak rising in Russia in June 1918, the Soviet Government seized in the Bureau of the Czecho-Slovak National Council a number of documents which throw a flood of light on the relations between this Council and the Allies. I learn that these documents, which are to appear at the trial, concern correspondence during 1917 and 1918 between Masaryk . . . who was at that time in London, and Dr. Maxa, President of the Czecho-Slovak National Council in Russia . . .

"Another document describes negotiations between Maxa, and the Head of French Military Mission in Russia, who hinted that if the Allies were to recognize the independence of Czecho-Slovakia, the latter must raise a rebellion against the Soviet Republic in the interest of the Allies. On hearing this Masaryk, who was still in London, telegraphed to postpone taking action until he had made further representation to the Allies; but on obtaining no concession in terms he informed Maxa that it was necessary to take action in order to secure the recognition of the Czecho-Slovak State, even if it meant bloodshed in Russia. Shortly after this telegram Czecho-Slovak troops seized the Siberian Railway and the line on the Volga. Since that time every effort has been made in Prague and Paris to prevent the publication of these documents."

This material, however, was never published by the Soviet Government nor the Czechoslovak Communists. The content of the documents seized in the office of the National Council in Moscow have been mentioned. The alleged cable of Masaryk to Maxa, which was to touch off the uprising, is a fabrication.

7. Bohumil Smeral, *Checho-Slovaki i Eseri* (Moskva: 1922). See also F. Necasek and J. Pacht, Eds., *Dokumenty o protisovetskych piklech ceskoslovenske reakce* (Praha: 1954), pp. 8-9.

8. P.S. Parfenov, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Sibiri 1918-1920 gg.* (Moskva: 1924), pp. 19-20.

9. It is true that the Socialist Revolutionaries were preparing an anti-Bolshevik uprising in Siberia for some time. At the end of May 1918 about 7,000 men were involved in the preparations. In Novonikolaievsk such a group consisted of 600 men. See Vegman, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-46. But no formal co-operation with the Czechs existed prior to the outbreak of the conflict on May 25, although some personal contacts were maintained; these played no role in the origin of the conflict.

10. This link was also made by J.A. White in his book *The Siberian Intervention* (Princeton University Press: 1950), p. 250. It is not clear, however, whether White made this link on his own, or whether he based himself upon Parfenov's other work *Uroki proshlogo. Grazhdanskaia voina v Sibiri 1918, 1919, 1920 gg.* (Kharbin: 1921), pp. 29-32.

This link is unfounded. The circumstances which prompted Gajda to draft his order are well known. There was no co-operation of the Czechs with the anti-Bolsheviks in Novonikolaievsk at that time. Gajda's visit to their headquarters took place on May 25. On the contrary, the Russians wished the Czechs to postpone their operations for six months because they were not ready.

11. F.G. Popov, *Chekho-Slovatskii miatezh i samarskaia uchredilka* (Samara: 1932), pp. 23-41.

12. It is true that in Jassy several conferences took place between the French representatives and the Czech leaders. The French were preoccupied with the problem how to restore the Eastern Front in Russia. An account given by Cerensky himself of one such conference, and his subsequent activities, refute Popov's allegations. Cerensky was asked whether the Czechs could be counted upon to assist in an attempt to renew military operations against the Central Powers in Russia: these operations, due to the German-Bolshevik armistice, would probably be resisted by the Bolsheviks and a conflict with them would be unavoidable. To this question, Cerensky answered that without permission of Masaryk the Czech troops could not participate in any such action. Masaryk himself later rejected this project. But in middle of February 1918, upon orders of the Chief of French Mission in Kishinev, General Voulemine,

NOTES

Cerensky organized one platoon of Czechs in Romania. Cerensky, however, informed the General that until Masaryk's consent these troops must not be used for any other purpose but fighting the Central Powers. When the Central Powers began their advance on February 18, 1918, this group retreated into Russia and joined the Bolshevik armed forces at Bendery. See Kratochvil, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

13. There is no basis for this allegation. Several Russian officers served in the Army Corps from its inception. But these were dismissed at the beginning of April 1918 and, those who remained were either deposed by the Cheliabinsk mutiny on May 20, like General Shokhorov, or themselves resigned, except a few, when the Czechs decided to mount the attack upon the Bolsheviks. The Commander of the First Division, General Kolomensky, and his Chief-of-Staff, Colonel Leontiev, had to be arrested in Penza because of their opposition against the planned attack upon the Bolsheviks. And it will be remembered that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Corps, General Shokhorov, a Russian, ardently worked in Omsk for the settlement of the conflict. The decision to strike against the Bolsheviks was taken by the delegates at the Army Congress in Cheliabinsk against the will of the commanding staff of the Army Corps. There was no influence of Russian officers upon this decision.

14. A.I. Melkhin, *Amerikanskata interventsiia na Sovetkom Dalnem Vostoke v 1918-1920 gg.* (Moskva: 1951), p. 19.

15. Kral, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-9. Also J. Muska and J. Horec, *Kuloze ceskoslovenskych legii v Rusku* (Praha: 1953), pp. 48-9. Also V. Vavra, "Z Masarykovy kontrarevolucni cinnosti v Rusku", in *Historie a vojenství* (Praha: 1954), No. 1; V. Vavra, "Americky imperialismus v pozadi cs. intervence na Sibiri", in *Historie a vojenství* (Praha: 1954), No. 4.

These interpretations were in vogue during the last days of Stalin era and were, as Vavra puts it, accepted by Czech writers from their Soviet colleagues as a matter of duty. However, writing in 1958, Vavra in his work *Klamna cesta*, pp. 243-4, repudiated his own "methodological errors" which had "exaggerated the role of American diplomacy", and which "had attributed to it a decisive influence upon every international question". He criticizes the works of some Soviet

writers, among them of A.I. Melkhin, for a similar "error". He also recants for his "uncritical acceptance" of some unfounded conclusions of C. Hruska and J. Vesely.

16. Kral, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-9. See also J. Muska and J. Horec, *K uloze ceskoslovenskych legii v Rusku* (Praha: 1953), pp. 48-9, 64.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 54. The endeavour to link the Czechs with the Socialist Revolutionaries, which had been attempted already by Smeral, is refuted by an account of this conference by Sip himself. Because the Co-operatives in Siberia had large stocks of supplies, the Financial Department of the Army Corps negotiated with Kostyn and nine members of the Directorate the supply arrangements. There was nothing secret about these negotiations. In fact, a representative of the Soviet Government was also present, and the arrangements agreed upon were then approved by the Government itself. See F. Sip, *Nekolik kapitol o hospodarstvi nasi sibirske armady* (Praha: 1926), pp. 10-2.

18. J.S. Hajek, *Wilsonovska legenda v dejinach Ceskoslovenske Republiky* (Praha: 1953); P. Hentges, "T.G. Masaryk et la grande conspiration contre l'Union Sovietique", *La Pensee* (Paris: September-October 1953), No. 50, pp. 67-73; Cenek Hruska, "Ceskoslovensti rudoarmejci", *Obrana lidu*, November 7, 1950; Cenek Hruska, *Velika Rijnova Revoluce a nase narodni svoboda* (Praha: 1950); Vaclav Kral, *O Masarykove a Benesove kontrarevolucni protisovetske politice* (Praha: 1953); J. Vesely, "Cesi a Slovaci v revolucnim Rusku 1917-1920", in *Nova mysl*, No. 3, March 1954, p. 437; Muska and Horec, *op. cit.*; Necasek and Pachta, Eds., *op. cit.*; Vesely, *O vzniku a zalozeni komunisticke strany Ceskoslovenska, op. cit.*; T. Syllaba, *T.G. Masaryk a revoluce v Rusku* (Praha: 1959).

19. Kral, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-62. Also Vavra, *Klamna cesta*, pp. 27-8. Also O. Riha, "Uloha SSSR v osvobozenecnych bojich ceskeho a slovenskeho lidu", in J. Vavra, *Z boju za svobodu a socialismus. Uloha SSSR v osvobozenecnych bojich a budovatelskem usiii ceskeho a slovenskeho lidu* (Praha: Csl. akademie ved, 1961), p. 17.

20. Kvasnicka, *op. cit.*

21. Klevanskii, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

22. For example, V. Vavra, "T.G. Masaryk and the

Legionnaires. How Was It All in Reality?", *Prace*, May 9, 1968. For a sharp attack upon the revival of Masaryk's ideas within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and his attitudes towards the Soviet Union see M. Silin, *A Critique of Masarykism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975. Also Jaroslav Krizek, "T.G. Masaryk a vystoupení cs. legii na jare 1918", *Ceskoslovensky Casopis Historicky*, Vol. 14, 1966, 637 ff; Pichlik K., Vavra Vlastimil, Krizek J., *Cervenobila a ruda, Vojaci ve valce a revoluci, 1914-1918*, Nase vojsko, Praha, 1957; Pichlik Karel, *Zahranicni odboj 1914-1918 bez legend*, Praha, 1968.

For an excellent survey identifying the initial stages of partial return to historical objectivity, see Stanley Z. Pech, "Ferment in Czechoslovak Marxist Historiography", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. X, No. 4, 1963, pp. 502-21. This process of regeneration was terminated by the invasion of the country by Soviet troops in August 1968, and historiography has returned to modified neo-Stalinist interpretations.

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6. *The Library of Princeton University*, Princeton, U.S.A.
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Za svobodu (Kiev), 1917-1918.

Index

- Aga Station, 60
Akulov A., Commissar, 341
Alapeievsk, Internationalists, 130
Alexiev M.V., General, 134
Allies, intervention 72; role of prisoners of war 147-9, recommendations of Drysdale 157-63; recommendations of Pichon 162; Wilson rejects intervention 163-77; blamed for the conflict 350-56
Alonski Rozjezd, 280; 282
All Russia Provisional Government, Ufa 344-6
Amur River, 57; 145
Anderson Paul, YMCA Chief, 155
Antonov-Ovseienko, 5; 11; 12; 15; 114
Anunchin, Commissar, 257; 335; defence of Irkutsk 335-41
Aralov A.A., stops the trains 13; 14; 47; Second Army Corps 101; German plans for a coup 179; Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 238-43; 256; attack upon the Legion 261-72; defence of Penza 290-93; 325
Archangelsk, 12, 58; Ogorodnik Plan 65-77; plan implemented 200-11
Army Soviets, 2; Communist Propaganda 87-8; Conference in Penza 194; reorganization 198
Astrakhan, 112
Aulehla, 213
Austria-Hungary, 4; armistice 109; peace 112; Repatriation Commissions 131; Red Cross 134; 142
Bakshirs, 338
Balashina, 130
Barabinsk, 316
Bardaush, 340
Barnaul, 135; anti-Bolshevik forces 318
Bartak F., 295
Bem J., 253
Benes Eduard Dr., 1; 4; Archangelsk Project 63, 354
Benes F., 107; 234
Berkheim, German Liaison Officer, 177
Blaha F., 51
Blazek J., 213
Bogorodsk, 130
Bonch-Bruievich, Commissar, 12; 76; 202; 203
Borzia, 59
Bohmmer K. von, German diplomat, 184
Boyarski, Commissar, 29; 298; 306
Brandstrom Elsa, Swedish Red Cross, 129; 135
Brazda V., 256
Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, 5; 112; 148; 270; 345; 351

- British Government, financial assistance 36; Archangelsk Project 64-77; plan for Allied intervention 72; Northern Route 200-11; problem of tonnage 246-8; Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 262-71; blamed for the conflict 348-9
- Brusilov Alexei A., General, 2
- Bureau of Prisoners of War, 121
- Bureau of Revolutionary Propaganda, 121
- Buzuluk, 103
- Caldwell John K., American Consul, 69
- Cecek Stanislav, Lieutenant, 196; 197; 233; 249; elected to the Military Collegium 253; plans for military action 261; commands operations against Penza 300-13; 344
- Cheperovev, 202
- Cerensky K., 351
- Cermak Bohumir, 1; 14; 36; Archangelsk Project 200-11; meets Trotsky 219-20; arrested 239-42; 262-3
- Caucasus, 64; 118
- Central Powers, 3; Finland 68; armistice 109; peace 112; Repatriation Commissions 131
- Cheka, 226; arrest of Maxa and Cermak 239-42
- Cheliabinsk, Internationalists 130; anti-Bolshevik coup planned by Berlin 178-83; Legion's Congress 218-23; Cheliabinsk Incident 230-32; fall of 332-42; 343; 344; 352
- Chicherin G.V., Minister for Foreign Affairs, Berlin's request 55-6; 60; 76; 79, Berlin's assistance 153; 154; 201; 263
- Chita, 48; 57; 58; 63; 144; 145; 331
- Chulym, 316; 324
- Cila M., Lieutenant 338
- Cila V., 255
- Chinese Internationalists, 304
- Chvojsky, Commissar, 120
- Clemenceau George, French Prime Minister, 14; 64; 70
- Clupek F., 235
- Cossacks, Dutov 46; Semenov 58; 142; 237; 290
- Constituent Assembly, Russian 345; Samara 352
- Corbeille, Colonel, 350
- Czechoslovak Army Corps, negotiations with Stalin 5-9; disarmament in Penza 16-31; more disarmament demanded 31-5; first trains disarm 38; Chicherin's cable 55-6; distribution of trains 56-7; all movement stopped 57-60; Ogorodnik's Plan 66-77; Communist propaganda campaign 80-94; desertions 94-105; Congress convened 188; mood of the troops 190-3; Conference in Penza 193-9; Archangelsk Project rejected 200-11; men drill for action 211-5; Cheliabinsk Congress 220-3; direct action planned 248-56; Maxa deposed 252; Military Collegium formed 253; seizure of Omsk 275-88; fall of Penza 288-313; seizure of Novonikolaievsk 313-25; fall of Irkutsk 325-32 fall of Cheliabinsk 332-42 collapse of Soviet power in Siberia 342-6
- Czechoslovak Communists, 16; influence upon the Government 18-9; Trotsky demands their free agitation 28-31; agitation starts 29-30; Archangelsk Project 68; propaganda work 80-93; Red Army formed in Penza 93-7; Red Army in Samara 98-100; Red Army in Omsk 100-4; political efforts 105-8; defeat at a Conference 193-6; public fiasco 199-200; Archangelsk Project 209; Trotsky-

- Aralov-Muna Plan 238-48; plans to dissolve the Legion 271; defence of Penza 307-8
- Czechoslovak National Council in Russia, Trotsky's request rejected 14; Penza Agreement 16-31; supply arrangement 35-8; financial arrangement 37-8; stops disarmament 42-3; orders to Smid 50; rejects the Archangelsk Project 64-77, Communist propaganda campaign 80-93; formation of the Red Army 94-104, deposed by the Communists 105-8; Congress convened 188; approves Archangelsk Project 200-11; deposed by Cheliabinsk Congress 252; 314-5
- Czechoslovak Red Army, formation in Penza 92-8; in Samara 98-100; in Omsk 100-104
- Dalny, 62
- Danish Red Cross, 131; 138, 142
- Dauria, 59
- David Josef, 198; 199; 249; 253; 293
- Dieterichs, General, disarmament 32; 33
- Dorman, Colonel, 35
- Drysdale Walter S., American Military Attache, 125; in Irkutsk 137; 142; 154; recommends intervention 157-63; his estimates confirmed 181; 331
- Dusek, 213
- Dutov Ataman, 46; 96
- Dvina River, 65; 207
- Dvinsk Okrug, prisoners of war 13
- Eisenberger Josef A. Dr., 194, 293
- Erben F., 234
- Erzberger, German Deputy Secretary of State, 151
- Fajgl A., 98
- Fic Victor M., 1
- Fiser F., 131; 217
- Finns, 204
- Fitzwilliams, British Major, 169
- Foch Ferdinand, Marshal, 14; 216; 265, 314
- Francis David R., American Ambassador, 172; German coup planned 178-83
- French Government, co-belligerent status 4; military assistance to the Bolsheviks 10-4; rejects Trotsky's request 14, financing the Legion 36; plans for Archangelsk Project 62-4; tonnage 69-77; Archangelsk Project 200-11; tonnage 246-8; Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 262-71, Lenin and Trotsky blame for the conflict 348-9
- Furtsov, Commissar, 53; 203; 235; 279; defence of Omsk 276-88; 333
- Gajda Rudolf, Captain, 132; 156; Order No. 38/1 213-5; ambushed 229; 249, elected to the Military Collegium 253; plan for military operations 260; operations against Mariinsk and Novonikolaievsk 313-25; meets Grishin-Almazov 318; attack upon Irkutsk 332; 333; 337; 343; 344; 351
- Gajer, Lieutenant, 212; 300
- German Government, armistice 109; Brest-Litovsk 112; protest 125; Repatriation Commissions 142; General Staff and Lenin 148; assistance to the Bolsheviks 149-57; Prisoners of War Republics 152; economic penetration of Siberia 159; anti-Bolshevik coup planned 177-83; mining of tunnels in Siberia 215, operations at Irkutsk 239
- Geyzman, Commissar, 331
- Gibis, Captain, 202
- Gursa Vaclav Dr., 20; 38; 43; 58; 102; 244

- Glos Jan Dr., 102; 203; 235; 265; 314
 Golovin N.N., 128
 Gregolsk, 120
 Grishin-Almazov, Colonel, Secret Organization of Russian Officers 318; Siberian Volunteer Army 320; Provisional Government of Siberia 321
 Guinet A., French Major, 265; 266; opposes Hanus 287; 314; 325; 341
 Hailnor, 59
 Hais A., 107; 194; 195
 Hajda, Lieutenant, 338
 Hanus O., Captain, operations against Omsk 278-88; 333; 337
 Harbin, 158; 173
 Harris E.L., American Consul, truce negotiations 328-331
 Hasek Jaroslav, propaganda campaign in Samara 98; Masaryk 99; tried 100
 Hetz, Commissar, 293
 Hicks W.L., British Captain, 162; 169; 331
 Hoblik, Captain, operations against Irkutsk 327-34
 Holecek V, 259; 265
 Holst Melle, Danish Official, 143
 Houska Vaclav, 38; 48; 102; 244
 Hrbek, 251; 256
 Hrouza, Lieutenant, 306
 Huntington Chapin, American Commercial Attache, 159
 Hurban Vladimir, 20; 244
 Innokentievskaja, 326; 328
 Innostrantsev, General, 350
 Internationalists, origin 17-8; in Omsk 101-2; in Russia 126-35; in Western Siberia 136-40; in Central Siberia 140-4; in Eastern Siberia 144-9; Cheliabinsk Incident 230-2; mobilized 235; defence of Penza 307; executions of 309-10; defence of Irkutsk 328-9; defence of Cheliabinsk 338-9; 343
 Irbit, Internationalists in, 130
 Irkutsk, opposition to the Legion 40; 41; 47; 48; 51; 57; 59; Red Guards 116; prisoners of war 132; Japanese landing at Vladivostok 141; Internationalists 141-4; Drysdale in 157-63; Lansing on intervention 171; anti-Bolshevik forces 318; fall of 325-32; 343
 Irtysh River, 278
 Ivanov, Commissar, 292
 Ivanovoznetsk, 116
 Izil-Kul, 279; 286; 287; 333; 340
 Janik Frantisek, 46; 202; 203; 205; meets Trotsky 219
 Janin Maurice, French General, 63; 169
 Japan, landing at Vladivostok 55; tonnage 66; intelligence estimates 136; 141; 161; 164; Trotsky's interpretation 243
 Jassy, 351
 Jenkins Douglas, American Consul, 127; 144; 161
 Jezvina, Corporal, 306
 Joffe Adolf, Commissar, 9
 Kadets, 150
 Kadlec Eduard, Captain, 229; seizure of Mariinsk 313-25; fall of Irkutsk 332
 Kakurin N., 114; 116; 117; 118; 139; 142; 318
 Kaledin Ataman, 117
 Kama River, 95
 Kansk Yeniseisky, 325; 341; 343
 Karakhan Leo, Commissar, 9; 20; Second Army Corps 23-6; Japanese landing in Vladivostok 141; 247; 356
 Karlov, Commissar, 283; 333
 Karymskaja Station, 58

- Kazan, 39; 103; 127; prisoners of war 129; 135
 Kennan George F., 151; 153; 161; 182; 183
 Kerensky A.F., Prime Minister, 3; 109; 270
 Khabarovsk, 48; 57; 138
 Kharkov, 95
 Kiev, 4; prisoners of war 134
 Kirsanov, Resolution of 88; 111; 118; 191; 356
 Klecanda Jiri, 1; 5; negotiations with Stalin 5-9; Lenin-Trotsky rift 13-4; negotiations in Moscow 26-31; new proposals 50; Communist propaganda campaign 85; 136
 Klevanskii A. Kh., 355; 356
 Kobelianko, Commissar, 178; defence of Cheliabinsk 333-42
 Kola, 61
 Kolishnei, 212
 Kolomesky, General-Major, 35; 296; dismissed 297
 Konshin, Captain, 350-51
 Kornilov L.G., General, 2
 Kosarev, Commissar, 76
 Kostyn V.V., 353
 Kotr Frantisek, 254
 Koudelka Oldrich, 195
 Koudelka, Captain, 316
 Kovalchuk, Commissar, 244
 Kozlov, Commissar, 308
 Kozyrev, Commissar, 235
 Knight Austin M., American Admiral, 176
 Knoflicek J., 240
 Kral J., 302
 Krasnoyarsk, 48; 50; 55; 124; 127; Internationalists 131; 160; 201; anti-Bolshevik forces 318; 327
 Kratina A., 256
 Krizek J., 31; 94; 96; 355
 Kroutil K., 51
 Krymov, Commissar, 336
 Kudela J., 89; 203; 235; 265; 313; 314
 Kuhlmann Richard von, German Foreign Minister, assistance to the Bolsheviks 149-52
 Kulomsino, 278; 279; 280, 283
 Kuraviev V.V., Commissar, Penza Agreement 20-31; 43; Communist propaganda campaign 82-93; defence of Penza 290-313
 Kurgan, 283
 Kursk, 5
 Kushva, Internationalists 130
 Kustra J., 256
 Kuznietsk, 96; 292
 Kvasnicka J., 355
 Lake Baikal, 63; 132; 145; 156; 330; 344
 Landberg, 321
 Lansing Robert, American Secretary of State, 70; prisoners of war 164; recommends intervention 164; Drysdale's reports 172; Admiral Knight's cable 176; 182
 Latvian Guards, 113; 115, 133; defence of Penza 307; 310; 341
 Lavergne, French Military Attache, 8; military assistance to the Bolsheviks 12-3; Archangelsk Project 64; Ogorodnik Plan 66-77; implemented 200-11; Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 262-7; 350
 Lazo S.G., Commissar, 142; 145
 Lelong, French Assistant Military Attache, 205
 Lenfeld Dr., 107; 209-10; 219; 223; 232; 294; 295
 Lenin V.I., 6; negotiations with Klecanda 5-9; conflict with Trotsky 13-4; 15; cable from Hasek 98; prisoners of war 125; Berlin's plans 148; 226; defence of Penza 291; 302; 348; interpretation of the conflict 348-9; 351; 356
 Leontiev, Colonel, dismissed 296-7
 Liebermann, Commissar, 302
 Liebersohn, Commissar, 308

- Lieb knecht Brigade, 122
- Lockhart Bruce H., British Diplomat, 9; 152; 154; 246; 247; Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 262-7; 350
- Lomovis, 190; 212
- Ludendorff Erich von, German Field Marshal, 177
- Lukianov, Commissar, 34; 38; 56
- Manchuria, 48; railway 58; Semenov in 60; 69; 103; 344
- Mandelstam M., Commissar, Second Army Corps 101
- Marianovka, 280; 281; 282; 285; 286; 287; 313; 332; 333; 340
- Mariinsk, 313; 332; 333; 352
- Maisner F., 198; 251
- Markov, 321
- Markovic Ivan Dr., 20; 46; 48; 102; 202; 205; 208; 247; 263
- Masaryk Thomas G., 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; Second Army Corps 7; 62; 63; 69; 99; 166; 270; 353; 354
- Maxa Prokop, 1; negotiations in Penza 20-31; disarmament 42; to Samara 46; 47; 48; 49; 50; new disarmament arrangement 51-3; Communist propaganda campaign 84-5; prisoners of war 138; Archangelsk Project 200-11; meets Trotsky 238-48; arrested 239-42; deposed by the Legion 252-62; involves the Allies 336
- McGowan American Consul, 140; 143; 159; 169
- Medek Rudolf, 89; 92; 193; 218; fall of Penza 293-300
- Meidel, German Officer, military assistance to the Bolsheviks 180
- Melnikov, Commissar, 41; 244
- Menzl O., 258
- Milne Alfred Lord, 74
- Minikin, Commissar, 290; 291; 292; 294; 295; 296; 301
- Minsk Okrug, prisoners of war 130
- Mirbach Wilhelm Count von, German Ambassador 150; German assistance to the Bolsheviks 151-3; 154; anti-Bolshevik coup planned 177-83; 184
- Mogilev, 2
- Morley J.W., 145; 146
- Moskalenky, 281; 285
- Moscow Guberniia, 112; Red Army 117; prisoners of war 129
- Mottl V., 194; 195; captured 308
- Muna Alois, Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 238-48; defence of Penza 293; escapes 308
- Murmansk, 12; 57; Ogorodnik Plan 65-77; implementation 207-11
- Muska J., 35
- Narva, 123
- Neubert Vaclav Dr. 243; 246; 325
- Niessel, General, Chief of French Military Mission 11
- Nielsen, American Consul, 127; 134
- Nievsky, Commissar, 284
- Nikonov, Commissar 89; 95
- Nizhnii Novgorod, 116; 127; Internationalists 130
- Northern Route, 61-77
- Nosek, Lieutenant, 316
- Noulens Joseph, French Ambassador, Ogorodnik Plan 68; 204
- Novonikolaievsk, 49; Internationalists 130; 229; fall of 313-5; anti-Bolshevik forces 318; Secret Organization of Russian Officers 318; Serbian Volunteer Army 320; Provisional Serbian Government 321; 332; 333; 343; 344; 350
- Ocenasek Ludvik, 308
- Odessa, 112
- Ogorodnik, General, plan of 55-6; implemented 200-11
- Oloviennaia Station, 344
- Omsk, Second Army Corps formed 5-30 trains stopped 41; new

- disarmament demands 46-7; Red Army formed 100-4; 125; Internationalists 130; prisoners of war 136-40; fall of 275-88; anti-Bolshevik forces 318; 333; 343; Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia 344-6
- Onon River*, 59
- Orel, 130
- Orenburg, 127; Internationalists 130; 343
- Orlov, 6
- Osloпов, Commissar, 46; 47
- Ostrovsky, Commissar 234; 298; 306
- Papousek Jaroslav, 184; 185
- Parfenov P.S., 350; 351-2
- Paris, Captain, French Officer, 20; 46
- Pascal, Captain, French Officer, 265, 314
- Pavlu Bohdan, 46; 178; 216, 249-54; 256; 257; 276; 325; 336
- Perm, 63; 67; Internationalists 130; 343
- Piff, 340
- Penza, Agreement 20-31, disarmament 31-5; first train disarmed 38; 78; Communist propaganda campaign 80 ff; Red Army formed 93-8; Internationalists 130, 270; fall of 279-313; 343
- Persia, 64
- Personson, Commissar, 51
- Petrus J. 228
- Petrograd Gubernia 113; Red Army 118; prisoners of war 130
- Petrograd Soviet 133
- Petropavlovsk, 103; Internationalists 131; 285
- Pexa, 195
- Pichon, Colonel, French Officer, 157; 162; 164
- Pichon Stephane, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, 70
- Priatina, 301
- Plesky Metodej, 212; 251
- Popov F.G., 351-2
- Polak Frantisek, 98; 199; 254; 255
- Polish Legion, 128
- Polonnikov, Commissar, 76
- Pospisil Josef, 95, 307; 308
- Price M. Philips, 350
- Prince Eugene, American Captain, 180
- Prisoners of war of Central Powers*, peace treaty 7; Bolshevik propaganda amongst 178; repatriation demanded 55; Berlin's demands 55-6; First All-Russia Congress 99; International Battalions formed 119-49; Repatriation Commissions 131; numbers in Western Siberia 136-40, numbers in Central Siberia 140-44; numbers in Eastern Siberia 144-9; Prisoners of War Republics 151; Drysdale's recommendations 157-63; Hungarians 160, Hicks & Webster Report 163 ff, anti Bolshevik coup planned 177-83, Cheliabinsk Incident 230-2, trapped in Siberia 343
- Prokofiev, Commissar, 326
- Provisional Government of Russia, 2; 133, 270
- Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia in Omsk, 344-6
- Pskov, 123
- Pysvejc A. 251
- Radek Karl, 9
- Rampont, French General, 8, 36
- Reading Lord, British Ambassador, urges intervention 164
- Red Guards, recruitment for 17; October coup 112; 154
- Red Army, origin 112-3, numbers in ranks 113-9, role of the Internationalists 110; Military Collegium formed 114; Latvian Guards 113-4, Trotsky's plans for 115; Internationalists in 120-49
- Reinsch P.S., American Ambassador, 167, 168-77; 331

- Reizler, 150
 Richter Frantisek, 178; 249; 253
 Riggs E.F., Captain, American Assistant Military Attache, military aid to the Bolsheviks 12; report on prisoners of war 127; 132; 153; 154
 Robins Raymond, American Officer, 9; urges military assistance to the Bolsheviks 9-11; prisoners of war 163; 172
 Rocek V., 196; 198; 253; 258
 Rostov, 130
 Ruggles James A., Lt. Colonel, American Military Attache, 127; 154; German military assistance 180
 Russian Constituent Assembly, 167
 Ruskin, Commissar, 76
 Rucicvo, 190; 213; 301; 310; 311
 Ruzaievka, 291
 Ruzicka F., 199
 Rybinsk, 180
 Sadlucky, Commissar, 230-1; 235; 237-8; 254; 255; 257; 332; 338
 Sadeul Jacques, Captain, French Military Assistant 9; 11; 12
 Sadovkin, Commissar, 231; 235
 Sagaydochnin, Commissar, 50
 Samara, Soviet 41; 54; Communist propaganda campaign 82; Red Army formed 89-100; Internationalists 130; 213; 291; 304; 313; 343; Constituent Assembly 352
 Saratov, 96; 235; 290; 291; 304; 310; 311; 343
 Saransk, 291
 Savinkov Boris, 354
 Schlichter, Commissar, 341
 Second Army Corps, plans for in Omsk 7-9; Karakhan's demands 24-6; 73-4; Communist propaganda 99-104
 Selenga, 162
 Semipalatinsk, 135; anti-Bolshevik forces 318
 Semenov Ataman, 58; 59; 60; 103; 145; 146; 159; 217; 278
 Serbian Army Corps, 128
 Serdobs, 190; 212; 292; 301
 Shikhonov, Commissar, 41
 Shokhorov Vladimir, general disarmament 32; Kirsanov Resolution 88; Trotsky-Aralov-Muna Plan 265-6; 279; 313; 314
 Siberia, Western 136-40; Central 140-44; Eastern 144-9; anti-Bolshevik forces 318; Siberian Volunteer Army 320; Provisional Siberian Government 321-24; fall of Soviet power 342-46
 Siberian Co-operative Societies 36; 61; 67; 351; 353
 Sibirtsev, Commissar, 244
 Sidonov, 321
 Simbirsk, 133
 Singer Company, 159
 Sivers, Captain, German Officer, 131
 Sixt Dr. 229
 Skotak Alois, 194; 195; captured 308
 Sip Frantisek, 35
 Slavic Legion, 353
 Smeral B., 350; 351
 Smetak, 213
 Smid F., 50; 51
 Smolka V., 254; 255
 Smolensk, 116
 Smolny Institute, 121
 Socialist Revolutionary Party (ESERs), 318; 350; 351; 352; 353
 Soviet of Foreign Workers and Peasants, 126
 Soviet of Social Democratic Workers of All Nations, 122
 Soviet Government, Legion permitted to leave 5-9; rift between Lenin and Trotsky 13-4; dual policy 16-31; Penza Agreement 24; Second Army Corps claimed 24-6; free agitation demanded

- 26-31; Moscow People's Bank 36; violations of Penza Agreement 42, new demands 50; Berlin's demands 55-6; Ogorodnik Plan 61-77; Communist propaganda authorized 80-93; formation of the Czechoslovak Red Army 94-105; deposes the National Council 104-8; formation of the Red Army 112-9; role of the Internationalists 119-49; decline of Soviet power in Siberia 135-6; Berlin's military assistance to 149-57; German coup planned against 178-83, Archangelsk Project 200-11; plan to dissolve the Legion 224-48; defence of Omsk 275-88, defence of Penza 288-313; defence of Novonikolaievsk 313-325; fall of Irkutsk 325-332; fall of Cheliabinsk 332-42; collapse of Soviet power in Siberia, 342-46
- Spacek V., 210
- Spartakus Bund, 122
- Srutek, 195
- Stalin J.V., 5; negotiations with Kie-canda 5-9; disarmament demanded 15; Penza Agreement 21-31; 34; Communist propaganda authorized 80-93; Second Army Corps 101; formation of the Red Army 94-105; Bureau of Czechoslovak Affairs 105-8; 207; 228; dissolution of the Legion planned 233-4; mobilization 235; plans for absorption of the Legion 271; 356
- Stefanik Milan R., 1; 63
- Steidler Frantisek, 183; 184; 319
- Stevens, American Railway Mission, 159; 173
- Sternberg, Commissar, 141; 143
- Straka Augustin Dr., 204; 205; 216
- Strombach F., propaganda campaign 82-3; 234; 235, defence of Penza 307-8
- Supreme War Council, Archangelsk Project 64; plan for Allied intervention in Russia 72; 7c; Northern Route 61-77
- Sura River, 80
- Sukhenov, Commissar, 244
- Summers Maddin, American Consul General, 171
- Svagrovsky Dr., 200; 205
- Svec Josef Jiri, Lieutenant, 212; commands operations against Penza 297-313
- Svoboda, 199
- Swedish Red Cross, 138
- Synek Jan, 195; captured 308
- Syromiatnikov, Colonel, 350
- Sytin, Commissar, 114
- Syzran, 41; 47; 54; 146, 213; 291; 334
- Tabouis, General, French Military Attache, 4
- Taiga, 135; 160; 227; anti-Bolshevik forces, 318
- Tambov, 103; 297; 310
- Tashkent, 124; prisoners of war 134
- Tatarskaia Station, 341; 344
- Tatianovce, 341
- Taube General von, 210
- Thomas Albert, French Minister of Labour, 10; 12
- Thomson, American Consul, 127; fall of Omsk 287
- Thunig-Nittner Geburg, 1
- Trumen Railway, 76
- Tomsk, 103; 125, 283; Siberian Provisional Government 318
- Trans-Siberian Railway, 6; 47; evacuation of prisoners of war 146; tunnels undermined 156; German plans for control of 178; Gajda's plan for capture 215; seizure by the Legion from the Volga to Vladivostok 342-6
- Troick, 342, 343

- Trotsky L.D., no exit for the Legion 9-16; Allied military assistance 9; opposed to Lenin 13-4; stops the trains 13; plans for the Red Army 14; his plan for the Legion 20-1; demands free Communist agitation 26-31; permits the movement again 43; new agreement with Klecanda 50; authorized Communist propaganda campaign 80-93; formation of the Czechoslovak Red Army 125; undermining the tunnels in Siberia 156; 161; Hicks & Webster Report on prisoners of war 162-3; 168; German military assistance 180; Archangelsk Project 206-11; meets the Czech leaders 219-20; decision to dissolve the Legion 227-48; arrests Maxa and Cermak 239; explanation given to Neubert 243-8; mounts the attack upon the Legion 261-71; involves the Allies 262-67; defence of Omsk 275-88; defence of Penza 288-313; defence of Novonikolaievsk 313-25; defence of Irkutsk 325-32; defence of Cheliabinsk 332-42; 348; interpretation of the origin of the conflict with the Legion 356
- Tsaritsyn, 103; 116; 127
- Turkestan, 64; 127; prisoners of war 134; 157
- Ufa, 52; 296; 337; 342; All Russia Provisional Government 344
- Ukraine, 3; 4; departure of the Legion from 6-7; Rada 113; Red Army 117
- Ulianov I.I., 129
- United States of America, tonnage 66; blamed for the origin of the conflict 355; new interpretation 356
- Uralsk, 96
- Ushakov, Captain, 325; 332; 343
- Uspensky, Commissar, 278; 279; 282
- Valenta F., 243
- Vancura A., 251; 256
- Vanicek V., 194; 195
- Vasek, 195
- Vasenko, Commissar, 342
- Vegman V., 318; 324
- Verge Arsen, Commandant, French Liaison Officer, disarmament 46; Archangelsk Project 201-11; 217; 218; 221; truce at Irkutsk 328-10
- Verchnie Udinsk 343
- Verkunovskaia Station, 88
- Viatka, 127; 343
- Vladivostok, 6; way open to 48; Japanese landing in 55; 59; problem of tonnage 69-70; Trotsky on 243-4; fall of 343
- Vojtechovsky Sergej, elected to the Military Collegium 253; plans for military operations 260; operations against Omsk 276-7; seizure of Cheliabinsk 332-42; 343
- Voronezh, 116
- Voronov, Captain, 229
- Voznesensky, Commissar, 41
- Vozenilek Karel, Lieutenant, 306
- Vseticka, Lieutenant, 229
- Wedgwood J., British Colonel, 157
- Webster W.B., American Captain, 162; 169; 331
- Wilson Woodrow, American President, rejects plans for Allied intervention 163-77; 181; 331; 353
- Yakovlev, Commissar, 51; 141; 155; 164
- Yansen, Commissar, 159

- Yegorchinskie Kupi, Internationalists 130
Yekaterinburg, 125; 127; Internationalists 130; defence of Irkutsk 335-42; 343
Yelets, 6
Yermilaiev, Commissar, 41
Zavada Bohuslav, 249; 253
Zeise, 151
Zharov V.M., 147
Zlatoust Soviet, 50; 76
Zmrhal Karel, 98; 133; 220; 256
Zozic Voivoda 316; 317